COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

IBM PC, CD ROM, Mac, Amiga

Issue 31 June 1993
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PROTOSTAR
Tsunami takes flight

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PLUS

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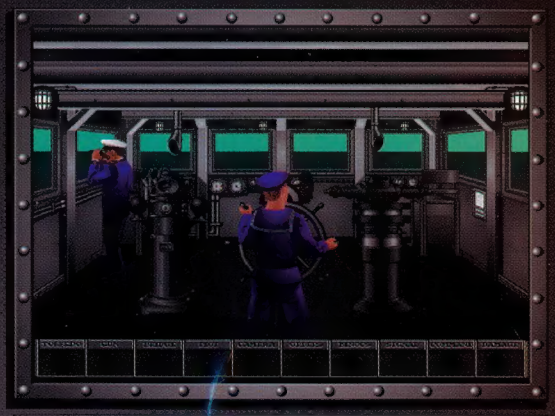
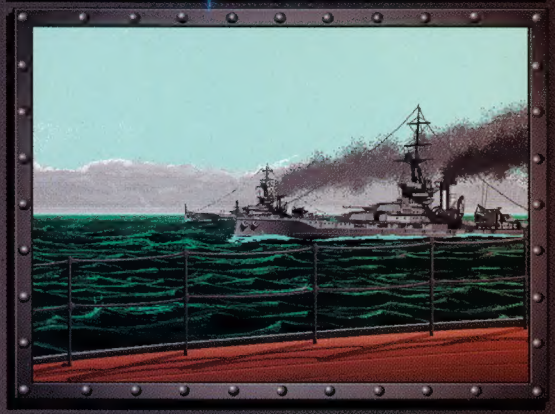
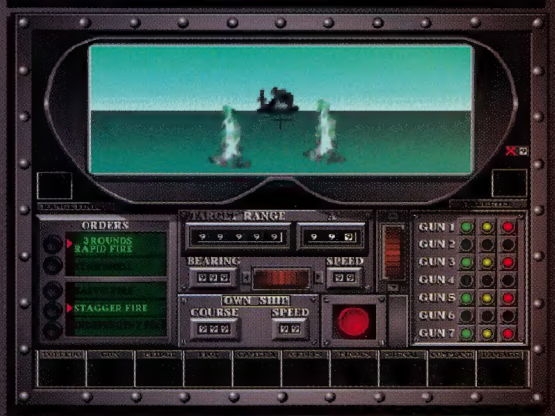
on CD ROM

Ships of Steel, Men of Iron

Jutland







Created by 'Commander' James R. Jones and his crew at Software Sorcery

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Reader Service No. 63

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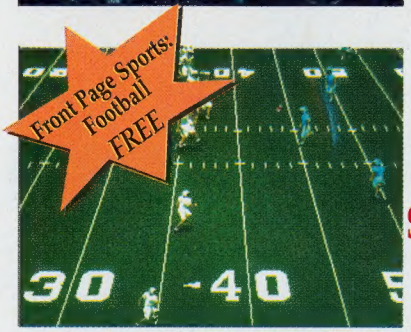

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

TAKING FUN SERIOUSLY

June 1993 Number 31

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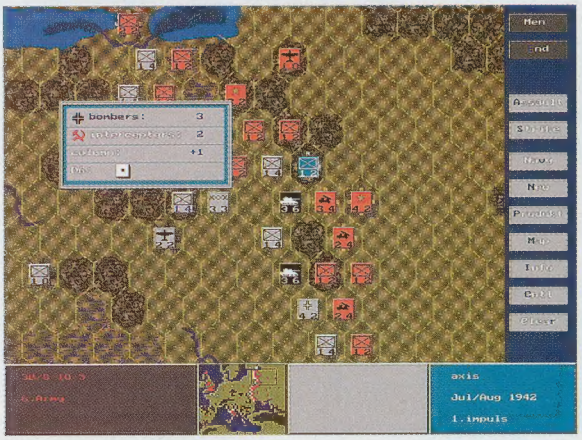

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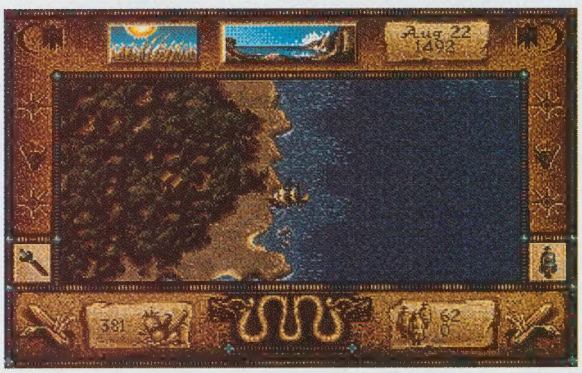

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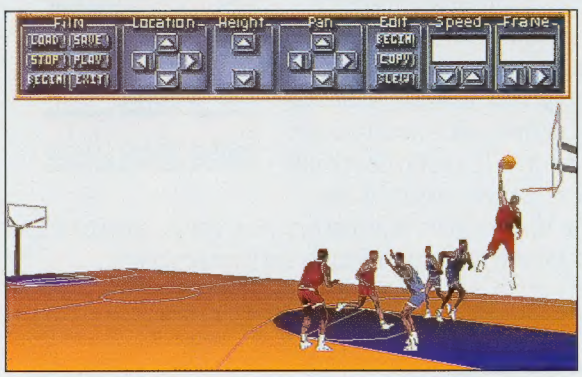

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Reader Service No. 6

Critical Mass

Once again the old chestnut known as the 'mass market' is being thrown around the industry. The main thrust of the discussion is how this intangible body can be lured into the hobby known as computer gaming. The keyword in this discussion should not be 'multi-media,' or even 'interactive.' It should be 'hobby,' for that is exactly what playing games represents for most adults; a hobby, no more, no less.

Not all games companies are capable of keeping even their existing customers happy, let alone trying to attract the new ones who have, perhaps, only a marginal interest in their products. The first thing that must be done then, is to satisfy the base market, ie the hobby. But what does the hobby want? According to such unscientific methodology as readers letters and response cards, the following are the issues that are uppermost in the minds of the players of games:

1. Bug free products. Customers don't mind waiting longer for games, but *do* mind waiting for upgrades just to make them work. They are not interested in hearing about unfinished games being released because a fiscal deadline had to met.

2. Games that provide play value. No one wants a game they can't finish, but *regular customers* don't want a game they can finish in three hours. $20 an hour is not considered good value.

3. Good computer opponents, or at least a modem option when this is not viable.

In the latest issue of his journal, our old friend Chris Crawford has some interesting things to say about the future of computer gaming: 'I think computer games are destined to become a backwater, a well-defined medium that makes money but has been consigned to a creative ghetto by society at large. Coin-operated games have long since passed that way. They have a stable industry, but they have no freedom to stray from the iron rules of marketing under which they live. Videogames are well on the way to the same fate. Computer games have begun the same process. Within ten years, computer games will be a creative ghetto, a tight little world of simulators and strategy games, profitable for those who play by the rules. Like model railroading, birdwatching, and knife collecting, it will have its own world, largely unknown to the general public.'

I would suggest that the latter state is one that has always been with us. The real question is: does it matter? After all, what's so wrong about catering to a hobby and making a respectable profit? Is bigger better? Clearly the hobby has to move forward, but does it have to suffer watered-down products (so as to try and attract the mass market) in order to do so? The only possible justification for a 'yes' to these questions is rising development costs. As these rise, so must the price or the customer base rise with them.

On the subject of creativity, Crawford has this to say: 'There hasn't been a single truly original idea in our industry since **Sim City**.' This view is not as contentious as it first appears and I for one would not dispute it (opposing views and examples gratefully received). But do consumers *want* original ideas? I would suggest that they do not. Most game players are conservative in the sense that they expect genre conventions to be abided by. For example, non fantasy role-playing games face an uphill sales task, while wargamers constantly complain about real-time games, though not only does such a mode makes perfect sense on a computer, but it also enhances the much-craved 'realism' element in the simulation. I mean, guys, did Rommel and Montgomery take turns?

I believe the industry moves in five year cycles and that we coming to the end of such a cycle. Wargames and role playing games will probably undergo the most radical change in the next two years as the two become entwined. Adventure games will start the drift towards optical storage while flight sims will take advantage of full motion video. All of these changes will help make products more attractive to marginal players and thus create the necessary expansion of the market without enfeebling it.

This is all speculation, of course, but for readers looking for something more concrete, I can say that we will be starting two new columns in the next issue which all being well, should be the biggest yet.❑

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Anything You Want...

You Got It!...

Reader Service No. 107

Access On Course

Not just one, but two new SVGA course disks are available for **Links 386 Pro**, thus providing us with an excuse to run yet another screen shot from the game. Pinehurst is the famous tree lined North Carolina course from designer Donald Ross. Rolling terrain (whoops, where'd that go?) and undulating greens form the basis of what is now the location of the grand finale to the PGA US tour.

The other course disk to be released by Access will be the Banff course located in Calgary, right in the middle of the Canadian Rockies ('Was that a mountain?'). Following this will be the Innisbrook course in Florida which in turn will be followed by the Belfry course in Birmingham, UK, home of the Ryder Cup and wonderful Indian restaurants.

Design Your Own Hole

Accolade, in conjunction with *Golf Illustrated* and Jack Nicklaus Productions, are pleased to announce details of the **Jack Nicklaus' Signature Edition** Hole Design Contest. The Hole Design Contest challenges computer golfers to create a perfect golf hole using Accolade's golf simulation, **Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design: Signature Edition** the only computer golf simulation with a course architect feature (it says here).

The Hole Design Contest will run from March 1 to May 31, 1993. To enter the contest players design must design a perfect par 3, par 4 or a par 5 golf hole. Contest details and official entry forms will appear in the March, April and May issues of *Golf Illustrated*. A panel of judges from Accolade, Jack Nicklaus Productions and *Golf Illustrated* magazine will determine the winning design based on accepted golf design criteria including challenge/difficulty, aesthetics and overall fun.

Three grand prize winners, a par 3, par 4 and par 5 winner, will win a trip to play in the Pro-Am event at either The Wendys 3 Tour Challenge held September 6, 1993 at New Albany Country Club in New Albany, Ohio, or The Nationwide Championship held September 22-23, 1993 at the Country Club of the South in Atlanta, Georgia.

The three grand prize winners will also receive copies of the *Golf Illustrated* Course Disk featuring the winning hole designs from the grand prize winners to be published at a later date by Accolade. In addition, 33 runner-up prizes, 7 par 3 winners, 19 par 4 winners, and 7 par 5 winners, will receive one year's subscription to *Golf Illustrated* and a copy of the *Golf Illustrated Course* Disk. No sign of the any of the $11m (see news story elsewhere on this page) being shelled out.

Spare Change?

Need cash? Then form a games company and people will *throw* money at you. Topping the list of handouts this month are Accolade who pocketed the not insignificant sum of $11m. Dealing out the readies were Prudential Equity Investors who received in exchange $4m of common stock and $7m in convertible preferred stock.

Accolade CEO Alan Miller said the cash would be used to launch games marketed under the banner Games With Personality (translation: Games With Licenses). Falling into this category come **Jack Nicklaus Power Challenge Golf**, **Brett Hull Hockey**, and **Pele Soccer**.

Spectrum HoloByte, who only recently were the beneficiaries of a substantial windfall, have received yet *another* endowment. Overdrawing on the plastic to the tune of $10m are the mysterious sounding Vertex Management who represent a variety of investors with *cash to spare*. The loot in this case will be used to make key investments in interactive products and technologies. It will also allow the company to invest in emerging technologies such as CD ROM and 3DO. This all sounds a bit vague to us, so we'll be keeping an eye out for Spectrum HoloByte press releases postmarked 'Seychelles.' Pulitzer's are made of this.

SPA Awards

The Software Publishers Association recently held their bi annual binge in San Diego. In the midst of all the natter about mailshots and whether or not Bill Gates should be the next president, the SPA annual awards for 'excellence in software' were announced. They were as follows: Best Action/Arcade: **Wolfenstein 3-D** (Apogee). Best Fantasy Role Playing: **Dark Seed** (Cyberdreams). Best Simulation: **Sim Life**. Best Sports: **Links 386 Pro** (Access). Best Strategy: **A-Train** (Maxis). Best Consumer Progam: **Stunt Island** (Disney). The SPA!!! *Whadda they know???*

Check out the *New* Air Bucks!

Due to overwhelming response to Air Bucks, Impressions are delighted to announce an upgraded version of the game, to give you, the player, the features you want!

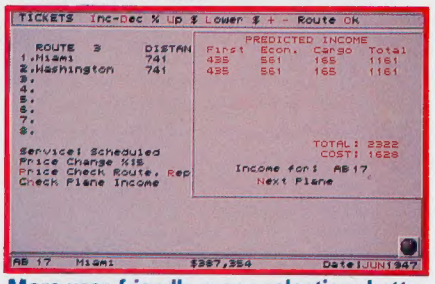
Better Graphics

256 color VGA graphics are used throughout the game

Animated Zoom Mode

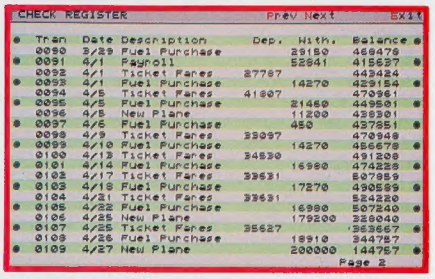
Watch your planes fly around the world; city selection & all other commands can be made from here

Better Interface



More user-friendly menu selection, better mouse & faster typing

More Reports



Detailed data on plane demand & costs is easily accessible

Among the many other enhancements made to the game are: ***Upgraded economic model & computer player AI, sound effects, personalisation of airlines, check register, better mouse & typing handling, city sizes now from 1 to 100 & vary thru time, print to paper options & lots more!***

AIR BUCKS v.1.2

available free to all registered users of Air Bucks 1.0/1.01

***Impressions** Committed to customer satisfaction in strategy entertainment!*

Warlords in Magic Sensation

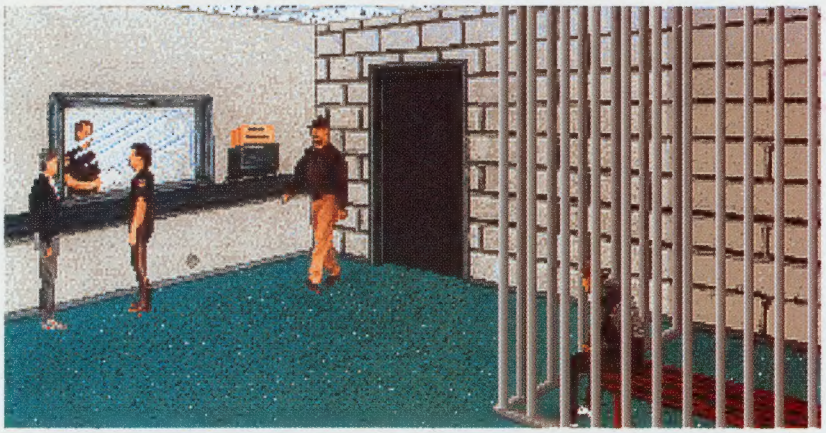
Here's what's up down under, specifically from the lads at SSG in Melbourne, Australia (G'day'). **Warlords II**, the sequel to the award winning **Warlords** game will be released, er, sometime soon. It will feature a number of improvements to the original game. Many of these improvements will be optional, giving the player control over exactly the type of game desired.

Some of the changes are as follows: random maps for infinite game replayability; hidden map option to make each new world a mystery; new AI system that promises to beef up the challenge; diplomacy option which provides a formal framework for back-stabbing and deceit; new movement systems and interface to make troop movement and control more flexible; new army types for enhanced production; troop transports and warships create a new dimension for amphibious warfare; optional quest structure to reward the pure or the cunning; powerful new magical items and abilities; 640 x 480 graphics; optional personalities for computer opponents; digital and midi sound support.

The boys have also been hard at work (they say!) on the **Carriers At War Construction Kit**: in addition to the usual editing facilities, the kit will include the following: three new scenarios -Wake Island, Guadalcanal and Tarawa; a 332 page manual including a complete tutorial; access to all elements of a scenario, including the AI programming through SSG's WarRoom routines; an update for existing **CAW** owners to Version 2.0 of the program; new versions for all existing CAW scenarios; new variants for all existing **CAW** scenarios.

Version 2.0 of **Carriers At War** also includes a number of improvements: crippled capital ships can be transferred to new Task Groups and sent to safety; new options for combat animations, and the level of detail and accuracy in combat reporting; special sightings can be created by the player, and strikes sent to those sightings. The weather can now be continuously displayed onscreen. Victory Points are now awarded for damaged ships. In order to support the new version, hardware requirements have increased. Version 2.0 requires 640K of RAM, 2 Mb of extended or expanded memory, a hard disk, a mouse and EGA or VGA graphics. Ad Lib and SoundBlaster cards are supported.

As of this wasn't enough, SSG announce the release of a new scenario disk for **Carriers at War - Japan Sweeps South** Due out July, this feature six new scenarios. These will include Leyte Gulf and Okinawa, a hypothetical 1936 clash, where both sides have lots of battleships, and the carriers only have bi-planes, plus a series of scenarios on the initial Japanese attacks on Malaya, the Philippines and Dutch East Indies, featuring a more effective British carrier response.



Blue Force: purple prose

Cop Seeks Parent's Killers

'A seething cauldron of corruption, greed and murder.' Let's be honest, this could describe many situations; a leisure software convention, dinner with in the in-laws, or the everyday ambience of our advertising department. The purple prose in this instance, however, is Tsunami Media's way of describing the goings-on in **Blue Force: Next of Kin**.

As police officer Jake Ryan, the player goes about his duties as a rookie motorcycle cop; showing off his new bike, issuing speeding tickets, and beating up suspects. During seemingly routine calls, clues and strange coincidences continually recall the unsolved murder of Ryan's parents. Even though ten years have passed since the killings, a twisted trail of evidence still exists.

Suspects abound and clues keep turning up in the strangest places. A low-life hoodlum lives on a quarter-of-a-million dollar yacht, street gangs appear with stolen National Guard automatic weapons, and the DA keeps throwing out the player's arrests on technicalities such as the suspect being dead.

In spite of the information gathered, no one wants to follow up on the case except Jack who is regarded as a pariah by other cops. Then, while patrolling his beat, he's run down by a speeding motorist. Was it an accident? Did he issue one too many speeding tickets? Or was he getting too close to the truth?

On disability leave following the accident, Ryan hooks up with his father's old partner, Lyle Jamison. His past is interwoven with the murder of Ryan's parents. He too, has a stake in solving the case. The two begin to work together to attempt to unravel the knotted threads within which this twisted tale lies tied. There are two million story lines in the software jungle. This has been one of them.

European Theatre Clash

SSI announce the release of **Clash of Steel**, an introductory level wargame from noted designer Norm Koger (**Stellar Crusade**, **Red Lightning**, **Conflict: Korea**). The game spans the European theatre circa 1939-1945, but also takes in Russia and North Africa. One or two players can play the Allies or the Axis. All unit types present in the WW II conflict are in play, including tanks, paratroopers, and air and naval forces.

Turns are described as 'multi-impulse', allowing players to take actions several times each turn, and are randomly generated by the computer. The army/corp scale is 20-30,000 men per unit which has the effect of making the game less complex and thus more manageable. The interface is click drag-and-drop while the map scrolls automatically.

Diplomacy is represented by a bar which displays the moods of neutral countries, whose non partisan stands can be changed by methods other than dropping a bomb on them. Research and production also play a big part in the game, while weather conditions affect play on the battlefield. All this comes wrapped it in high res 640x480 256 color VGA graphics and full sound support. Given Koger's reputation in programming smart computer opponents, **Clash of Steel** should be a cracker.

Conquer for Windows: a smasher

Windows Smash and Grab

Just when you beginning to think that Windows games have as much depth as a shrunken pancake along comes **Conquer For Windows**, a new game for everybody's favorite GUI *(are you quite sure about that? - Ed)*. This is the first release from Elpin Systems and although it can be played against the computer, '**Conquer**' offers a myriad of multi-player possibilities. Modem play is supported, while up to four players can play on networks running the NETBIOS interface.

Although computer opponents are provided, **Conquer** was designed with multi-player games in mind; turns are simultaneous and are resolved when both players have finished, thus avoiding the irritating waits of rotational turn based games. The objective is to grab land, build cities, and smash opponents.

The game's designer, Larry Coffey, says the inspiration behind **Conquer** was Avalon Hill boardgames, though Conquer is 'much simpler.' It does not purport to be a simulation, but the emphasis is firmly on strategy rather than arcade action. Units are represented by icons with combat occurring when armies meet. In addition to numerous maps and scenarios, a map editor is included also.

Conquer is one of the first games to take advantage of the 1024x768 resolution that Windows can offer, *and* in 256 colors.

Railroad Tycoon in Africa Shock!

Microprose are to release a new version of their classic **Railroad Tycoon** game. The main additions are three new maps. These will be: the American continent taking in parts of Mexico and Canada; South America; Africa, south of the equator. Also, there will be five new locos. The graphics will be in high res 16 color VGA, rather than the EGA of the original.

The various bug fixes that have been issued since the game first appeared will all be incorporated into the new version. Microprose say that there will also be a 'few surprises' included in the game. A June release date is anticipated. Oh well, there goes summer.

Creative Blast in the Labs

Following the success of their Multimedia Upgrade Kit, Creative Labs are offering several more Multimedia bundles. The Edutainment Upgrade Kit consists of the Creative Labs CD ROM drive, the 8-bit Sound Blaster Pro card, and lots of software.

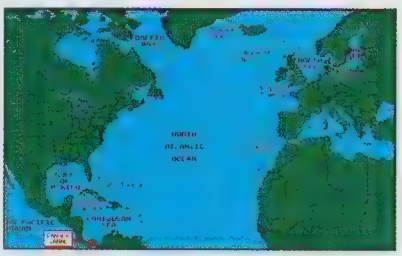
The Discovery Upgrade Kit adds speakers and the choice of the 8 bit Sound Blaster or the new 16-bit Sound Blaster card and external or internal drives. And lots of software.

Sim Can Graphics Shock!

What strange times are these. Britain's Royal Family announce they are to pay taxes, Sierra appoint hard nosed ex cop Daryl Gates to oversee games design, and now Simulations Canada declare that their future releases will contain...gasp, *graphics*! Is nothing sacred?

This shock news was revealed during a routine enquiry about their new game **Red Sky at Morning**. The game itself has the catchy subtitle of **Naval Strategy in the Modern Era** and features the naval forces of every major maritime power, post cold war.

The central viewpoint is that of Chief Naval Operations Commander for a nation or group of nations currently at war. From this position the player is presented with a series of command



Red Sky at morning: A Sim Can screen shot

briefings which detail the status of enemy forces.

This is a real-time game with combat reports being tracked by telemetry. The graphics include a worldwide map for overall status depiction and also theatre situation maps. Six scenarios are included, three dealing with hypothetical situations and three covering historical simulations of crisis situations.

Sim Can also have another new game, **Man of War**, but no pics of that as yet (let's take one thing at once). The synopsis for **Man of War** sounds like it could be worth waiting for, not least because it covers the neglected subject of the fighting ships of yore, the age of sail, the time when no self respecting sailor would be seen without a parrot droppings on his beard.

Those familiar with the Avalon Hill boardgame **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** will recognize many of the elements present in **Man of War**, though the emphasis here is on strategic rather then tactical combat. The action can be between individual ships (opposing frigates) to huge fleets battling it out. The ships included range from triple deckers to sloops.

On-screen graphics include a 'look about' which enables the player to view the ocean area adjacent to the command ship, while a 'situation plot' shows the approximate locations of fleet elements as drawn on an overhead map. Navies represented in the game include: England, France, Holland, Spain, and the United States. A scenario builder will also be included.

THE VERY BEST IN STRATEGIC STARSHIP COMBAT

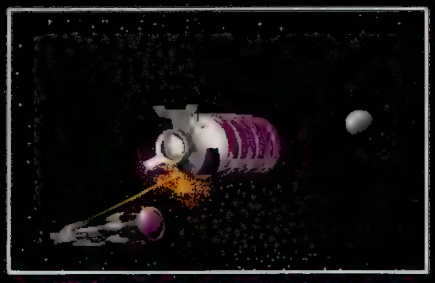
Impressions are delighted to announce an Omnitrend production - Rules of Engagement 2!

The original became an instant success -"one of the top 6 games of 1991" (Newsweek), "involving, well-planned, entertaining, highest levels of intelligence and excitement" (Computer Game Review).

Now, the sequel surpasses even the original's excellence!

Rules of Engagement 2 is a real-time, strategic space combat game. The player commands a fleet of starships engaging enemy ships in campaigns composed of multiple combat missions. The attention to realism and detail (Omnitrend's hallmark) and the sheer size of the game are phenomenal, and are made accessible by the unique easy to use control system.

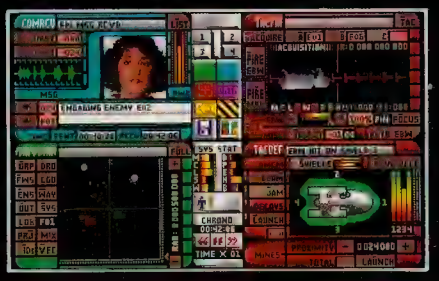
Rules of Engagement 2 is the latest Interlocking Game System module - and can link with *Breach 2* or *Breach 3* (coming this fall).



a still from an animated squence

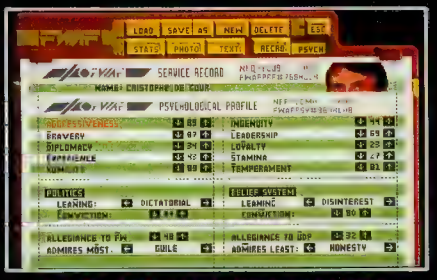
- Exciting animated sequences featuring 3D rendered spaceships relate the storyline at strategic points within campaigns. Players can create their own tree-structured campaigns with the world's first campaign-builder - and can even include their own PC Animate Plus animation files!

- *Rules of Engagement 2* features an outstanding interface. Game screens consist of four QuadPanels, color coded to distinguish different control systems. The central control bar coordinates all activity between panels. Users can select which of the 28 QuadPanels appear on the main screen - and can even save several configurations for use in different situations.

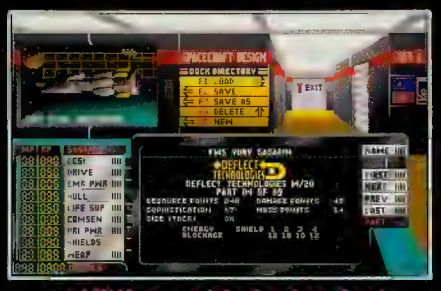


sample configuration of QuadPanels

- *Rules of Engagement 2* offers a significant advance in artificial intelligence within computer gaming. Each starship captain has a substantial dossier complete with many personality traits which affect how he, she or it reacts to orders and situations which arise.



a starship captain's dossier



outfitting a ship in dry dock

- *Rules of Engagement 2* offers immense replay value, allowing the player to design and construct both friendly and hostile spacecraft and their captains, specify the physical and mental capabilities of the enemy forces -- and design solar systems in which the battles will take place!

Committed to Excellence in Strategy Entertainment

Impressions Software, Inc. 7 Melrose Drive, Farmington, CT 06032

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2

OMNITREND

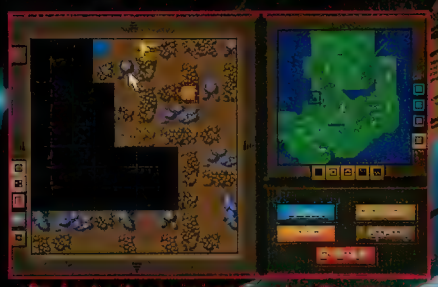
INTERLOCKING GAME SYSTEM™

Impressions

Reader Service No. 107

WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR™

Design your own spacecraft



Send out units on missions to explore the unknown enemy planet and erode out its military capability!

Command your entire planet's military resources in an effort to conquer a hostile neighbouring planet. You control a state of the art workstation from which advanced software tools enable you to design new craft, research new technologies, build new installations & craft, set up highly sophisticated missions and watch the progress of this strategic interplanetary conflict.

- Battles take place in space & on surface of both planets
- Random planet generator for great replay value
- *Designed as a 2 player game!*

Impressions *Committed to Excellence in Strategy Entertainment*

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Reader Service No. 157

Protostar

Brian Walker previews the new game from Tsunami Media

After getting off to a somewhat inauspicious start with **Ringworld**, Tsunami Media now try their luck with another science fiction game, but there any similarity with their first release ends. The primary objectives in **Protostar** are to establish relations with the local sentients, then rally them to the cause. In the process players will frequent Outposts, meet some very odd characters, explore distant worlds, visit alien cities, and engage in both stellar and surface combat.

In spite of all these glamorous sounding escapades, good old fiscal management has its part to play and is indeed crucial to the success of the missions. Hard cash will pay for vessel maintenance, trade capital, crew salaries and, most importantly, the support of defense forces in the home Sector. Tsunami say characters in **Protostar** will feature believable intelligence. Each will follow an agenda based upon attitude and objectives, though their behavior will be influenced by player actions and conversations.

This interactive adventure is presented in the first person perspective. The surroundings of one's character are presented as if they were being viewed through their eyes. The interface enables players to simply 'choose' subjects that they wish to interact with, and 'describe' those that they wish to learn more about.

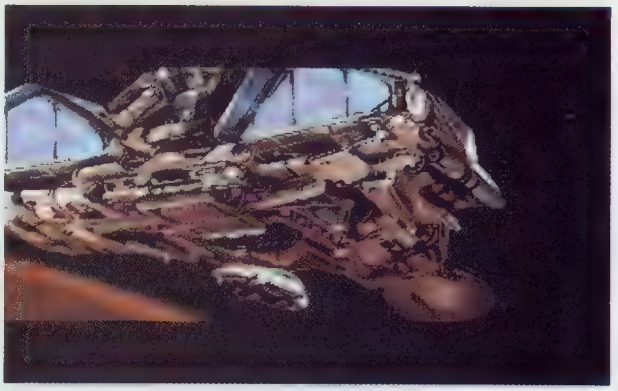
Newfront has established three Outposts on the frontier region. Each Outpost offers equivalent services. These are available through the Com-Terminal, Exchange Center, Biotech Center, Frontier Craft, and the Lounge. A central junction links all Outpost facilities. In the Com-Terminal announcements may be reviewed. Game developments and general information are broadcast in the announcements.

There are various choices available for the approach to be taken when bartering upon first entering a Trade Center. The effect of each technique varies with each alien species.

Merchants represent the interests of their specie, so they want to benefit from the goods that they purchase and sell. Merchants are pleased when they make a profit, disappointed when they take a loss, and get extremely ticked off when pushed too hard.

Crew members that are disabled during combat are placed in cryogenic suspension. These characters may be revived in the Biotech Center through Emergency Treatment. The game ends if one's character is disabled. If one gets tired of all the interactive conversations and saving humanity, then the lounge is an ideal place to relax. Like-minded souls may be encountered and leisurely pursuits (games?) engaged in.

The game has been designed by Vas Nokhoudian who sounds as though he might know a bit about space himself. **Protostar** occupies the same gaming territory as the EA's excellent **Star Flight** series, though whether it can match the humor offered remains to be seen. Certainly the sound and graphics look to be up to snuff, as one would expect from a cast list that resembles the credits for *Ben Hur*.❑



***Protostar** will be published by Tsunami Media when their employees awake from cryogenic suspension*

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Strategy Plus

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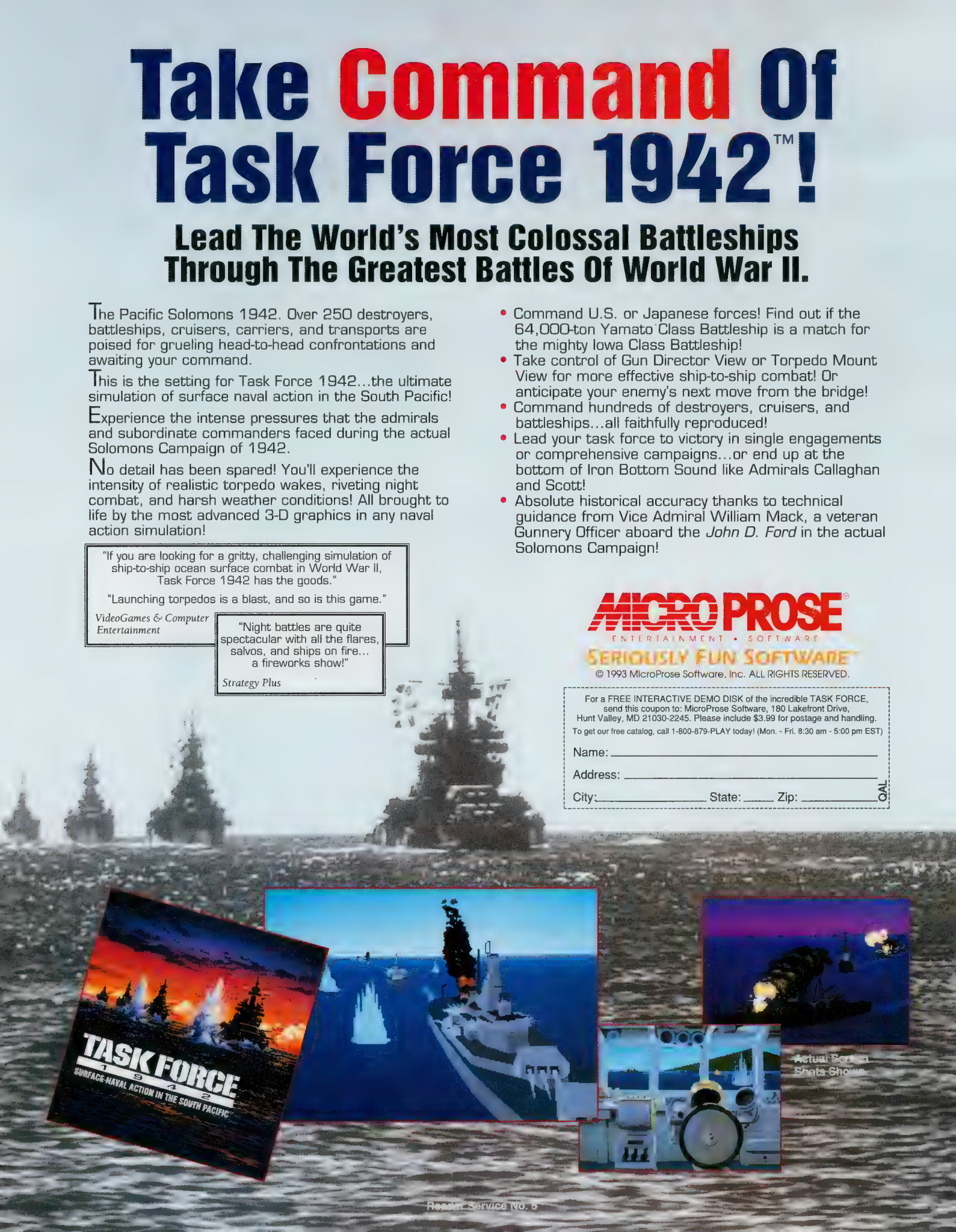


Seven Cities of Gold

Brian Walker previews an old new world

Games designer Dan Bunten is best known for his multiplayer games, though perversely his best selling game was the solo **Seven Cities of Gold**, a wonderful mix of exploration and strategy whose appeal was only limited by the (8 bit) hardware of the day. How nice then, that Electronic Arts decided it was time for a revamp so that the game may be introduced to a brand new audience, as well as offering a dose of nostalgia to old timers such as myself.

Sound card support has now been added, though the basics of the game have changed very little. Even the 256 color graphics do not that look that much different from the primitive but effective 8 bit palette, while the interface eschews the mouse in favor of the keyboard/joystick combination of yesteryear.

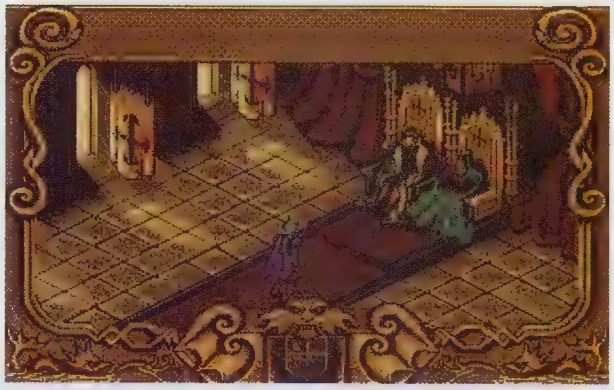
Players start off in Barcelona where they must decide whether to take on the role of Christopher Columbus (Historical World) or be just an old salt with a fancy for bit of derring-do (Random World). Once it has been decided who one is, the next step is to visit the harbormaster to obtain a crew and buy some kit. Sailing is quite a simple matter, just hit the arrow key or point the joystick in the desired direction and just watch the little galleon whiz across the screen, rather in the manner of **Pirates**.

Upon reaching land the player can decide how many crew disembark. Sufficient food must be dropped off if the men (there are no girlies) are to avoid eating the local plants and each other. The first thing to look for on land is a native settlement and its Chief. The manual recommends avoid bumping into the natives as it makes them hostile (this must be New York). When confronting the Chief, several options present themselves: Trade, Threaten, Give Gift, Amaze Chief with the trickery of 15th Century science, Beg, or Leave.

New World items such as spice, artifacts, and plants can be very valuable back in the old country. Information can also be traded from the natives, indeed, this appears to be the best way of discovering things quickly as well as gaining tips about places to avoid. Native guides can be hired to forage for food.

Of course, there are those silly natives who are not interested in trading anything. The hostile types who foolishly view the white man as the harbinger of their doom. These natives will try to ambush the innocent explorer. Combat sequences occur here, or to ward these off, the miracles of European science can once again be employed to try and bemuse the dusky savages.

The objective is in all this is to set up colonial outposts, and eventually missions and colonies. All this will take considerable journeying between the old and new worlds. It will take about 100 men to establish a mission, plus the dreaded clergy, while even more will be needed to create a colony. The 'new world' of the historical version was included so as to attempt to provide a tie-in with the Columbus centenary, that is before Chris got rumbled (Natives discover Columbus shock!).



The version I played of **Seven Cities of Gold** was in that nebulous state between alpha and beta. And how did I fare? I set sail with a hearty crew (and John Harrington) of soldiers and explorers, but no clergy. Unfortunately I dropped them off at the wrong island and they all died. It was God's will.❑

***Seven Cities of Gold** will be released by Electronic Arts after the Columbus celebrations have died down*

Reader Service No. 65

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RGE OF EVERYTHING?

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Reader Service No. 65

Seal Team

Brian Walker previews EA's new tactical wargame

Vietnam has always been one of the more problematic wars when it comes to simulations, not because of any lack of strategic or tactical deficiencies in the war itself, but more out of political considerations. It's perhaps significant that the only games on the subject were released by UK publishers: Domark's **'Nam** and MIcroplay's **Conflict in Vietnam**. But now, stepping gamely into the breach comes Electronic Arts with **Seal Team**.

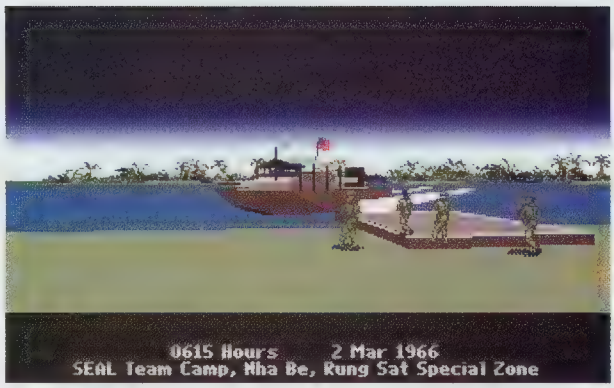
As the title suggests, this is pitched at the tactical level with the player taking the role of 'point man' of the squad. The default view (there are four others) is of the entire team, with the point man in the lead followed by three other Seals in formation. The possible formations are: Column, In-Line, Diamond, and Vee Wedge. Seal Teams only have two types of movement; slow, and bat out of hell. The former is the one most used in order to preserve stealth, while the latter is used when Charlie is up your bum.

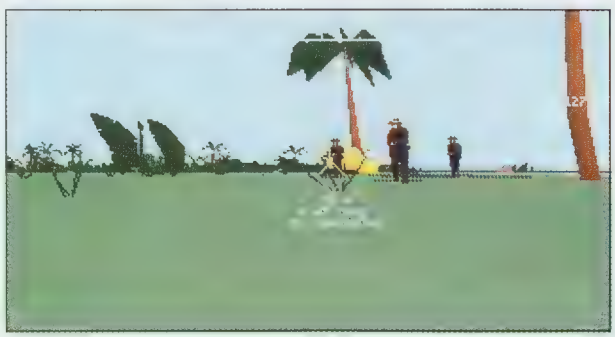
The game is played in campaign mode with the composition of the squad being dependent on the year. The squads can be modified according to mission; weapons, tools, pack weight, may all be changed. The 'tools' are used to locate unpleasant things like booby traps.

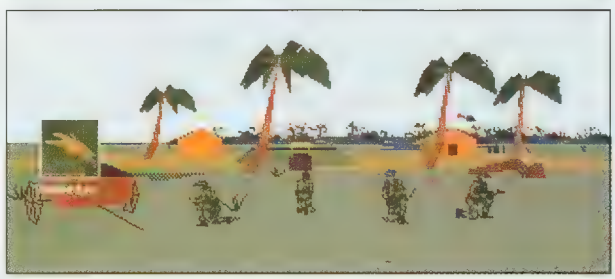
There seven mission types in total: Ambush, Demolition, Rescue, Recover, Patrol, Snatch, and Observe. Once briefed, the squad is inserted into the mission area by either helicopter or patrol boat. A map screen may be called up to determine position both of one's self and other squad members relative to the objectives. The team may be spilt for tactical reasons in which case orders are communicated by radio. Air and sea support plus artillery, is available with targets being specified by waypoints.

The combat, inevitably in a game like this, has a slightly arcade feel to it but those of slow reflexes will find that strategic considerations are what count in the long term, always providing that one does not die in the short term. The current weapon can be fired by simple pressing 'Enter' and 'R' to adjust rate of fire. The rest of the team only fire at the point man's command which appears as a hand signal on the screen. Most of these orders can be issued via the keyboard. At the conclusion of each mission, the Campaign screen pops up along with the latest ratings and medals, or wreaths for the more unfortunate. Although **Seal Team** is a solo game, the High Score screen gives one something to aim for.

At this stage **Seal Team** looks like a game full of promise. The movement system is very fluid, as is the interface, while the squad level nature permits a high degree of player identification. Accompanying the package is an excellent manual which traces the roots and prosecution of this most controversial of wars, culled from a variety of reputable sources.❑







Syndicate

Design notes by Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux

Three years ago when the Bullfrog team had just completed **Populous**, and **Powermonger** was in development, we wanted to create a game which was able to appeal to both strategy and action fans alike. Our initial idea was to enable players to control a character through influencing him in a manipulative rather than direct way. With this notion in mind, we came up with something we dubbed the 'API scale.' This stands for adrenalin, perception, and intelligence. These attributes can be increased or decreased so that characters will act accordingly.

With these three scales and the permutations thereof, it is possible to have a character perform a wide variety of actions in an equally differing number of ways. For example, in **Syndicate** a character can be sent from one location to another just by a mouse click. Normally the journey would be covered in a reasonable time, but cranking up the adrenalin of that character would speed up the trip considerably. However, this has its pitfalls because the character is much less likely to notice danger lurking. Learning to tweak these attributes according to the situation in hand is crucial to success in the game, that is for the strategist. The action player has the option to ignore such concerns and run like hell, blasting away.

Once we had got all the intricacies worked out, we decided to work on what we regarded as the most ambitious part of the game. In our previous products we simulated entire countries and worlds, but now we wanted to simulate a city. It is much harder to simulate the small than it is the large, as say, in **Powermonger** where we simulated a country. As there was not so much detail in this it was unnecessary to show every action, but with **Syndicate** we had to show almost every aspect of a working city. Like all our games, **Syndicate** will be real-time (people in real cities do not move in turns).

One of things I think will excite players in the game is the ability to send one's agents into the city to cause havoc, or, to liberate the inhabitants. If an agent goes up to one of the citizens and pulls a gun out there are many different ways the intended victim will react. Some will fight back if they have a weapon, some will run away, and some will flee in such a panic they are likely to run straight under a passing car.

So, we had two elements of **Syndicate**: the living city, and the agents. Now we had to work on the story of the game and the strategic element which is based on conquering the cities. We came up with the idea of players running a corporation. This appealed to us because it is another 'power' concept. Everybody wants to be either a general, or a boss, so as the head of a power grabbing monolith these ambitions can be combined.

Flashy graphics and booming sound are now taken for granted (so I won't mention these), but means nothing if the game is not playable. The key to this was getting the play balance, vis-a-vis the computer opponent, absolutely right. To this end, we have had over fifty different playtesters as well as two full time designers working on the game. The fact that they are *still* playing the game when they could be down the pub must mean something! ❑

Syndicate will be published by Electronic Arts in June

Caesar

By Marc Dultz

Designed by
David Lester

Published by
Impressions

Systems
IBM PC, Amiga

PC System
Requirements
386/16, 2.5 meg
hard disk space

Graphics
VGA, EGA

Supports
Mouse, AdLib and
Soundblaster
sound cards

*Caesar, se' zer, n.*1. A title, originally a surname of the Julian family at Rome, which, after being dignified in the person of the dictator C Julius Caesar, was adopted by successive Roman emperors, and latterly came to be applied to the heir presumptive to the throne; personification of the civil power, the State - *Webster's Encyclopedia*

2. A **Sim City**-like simulation of the Ancient Roman Empire, in which the player, as planner, must create a city, province and empire capable of standing the test of time - *Strategy Plus* Dictionary of Computer Gaming.

Vide et Crede

Imagine, if you will, a game of epic proportions whose inherent premise is to create and defend an empire of expansive breadth unequaled since the days of the Roman Empire. In fact, that's the game's sole aim; Build the Roman Empire! To lay that detailed a foundation sounds a bit wearisome and unparalleled at best, but that's where one can naturally be mistaken. If the mortar, or game design, is mixed in the proper proportions and the bricks, or entertainment value, are lovingly baked in Impressions oven till it's hue is a golden brown, then the empire-of-the-making is sure to last a thousand years. Romulus and Remus would be proud.

The game begins in the year 12 B.C. with the new found governor shoving off with 8000 Denarii (the Roman unit of currency) in his pockets. Skill levels can be adjusted to one of three levels from easy to hard. Skill levels adjust for the numbers of Plebians necessary to maintain the city, the frequency of barbarian attacks and the earliest time they can be expected to attack.

Firstly, witness a depiction of the empire from Britania in the west to the Bosporous in the east, from Germania in the north to Africa and Judaea in the south. The map comes subdivided into provinces and it is one of these provinces (determined randomly by the computer and denoted via a standard) that is to be governed by the would-be Caesar. At the provincial level, one can view the expanse of his kingdom.

Apart from a great deal of brush, the province initially contains a single cohort of a Roman Legion (the Prima Cohors), a few small towns, and the 'entrance ramp' for the Imperial Highway Junction. Think of the provincial level as a state road map, whereby strategic decision-making will determine if cities will flourish or flounder, remain protected from invasion, or lay bare to barbarian hordes.

Most of the time will be spent at the tactical view, better known as the city level. Here, the populace's homes and various buildings will be erected, roads and pipelines laid, and generally the coddling of citizens takes place. Fail to supply them with water and they unmercifully rip down their building's fine Corinthian columns. Fail to provide them with jobs via industry and the meaning of high unemployment is literally driven home. Fail to offer a little night life and the lions at the local coliseum await.

To help avoid Icarus's flight of fancy, seven advisors from the Forum monitor progress. From politics to finances, industrial output to military shotput, Ed Koch's phrase 'So How Am I Doing' is given new meaning. Various administrative charts or symbolic renderings are but a mouse click away, each advisory panel as important as the next in determining what goes where in the civil jigsaw puzzle. It's clear that a lot of thought went into the working model, with many information stratum apparent.

Aere perennius

Care must be taken to strike up the proper balance of construction projects. Homes, intially thrown up as huts can either disappear due to mismanagement of resources or slowly evolve into grandiose manors. Fully sixteen grades of 'dormering' can be found within the game's creative confines. No less is true when selecting other buildings for blueprints. Markets, industry, temples, fountains, plazas, forums and coliseums are just a few of the choices on the construction menu. Each can evolve into more elaborate structures or, as easily, fall into disrepair due to any number of misfortunes.

As one's city blossoms, certain visual and aural cues reflect the changing behavior of it's populace. Ambient sounds such as gurgling fountains, soldiers marching, and coliseums roaring with cheering throngs are evident throughout. Soldiers and citizens travel the roads, rioters stomp on buildings, and barbarians breach the city's walls. Suffice it to say, don't look for traffic jams in this sim.

Time is measured in yearly increments and can be toggled to pass quickly or slowly. As well, various news arrives

from Rome indicating the relative situation of the Empire. Lots of things are going on at once. Toggling between provincial and city levels, beating back barbarians, and creating thriving cities would make any juggler smile.

Veni, Vidi, Vici

Where **Sim City** had Godzilla and earthquakes, floods and fires, so too does Caesar have it's nemesis. This time around the adversary is the oft-beleaguered barbarian, once again bent upon wreaking unending amd merciless destruction upon the civilities of one's empire.

One of the prime methods of keeping Atilla and his Huns at bay is to construct walls both at the provincial and at the city level. These passive defenses are not the end all solution though, as they must be properly maintained and guarded to afford any defensive value.

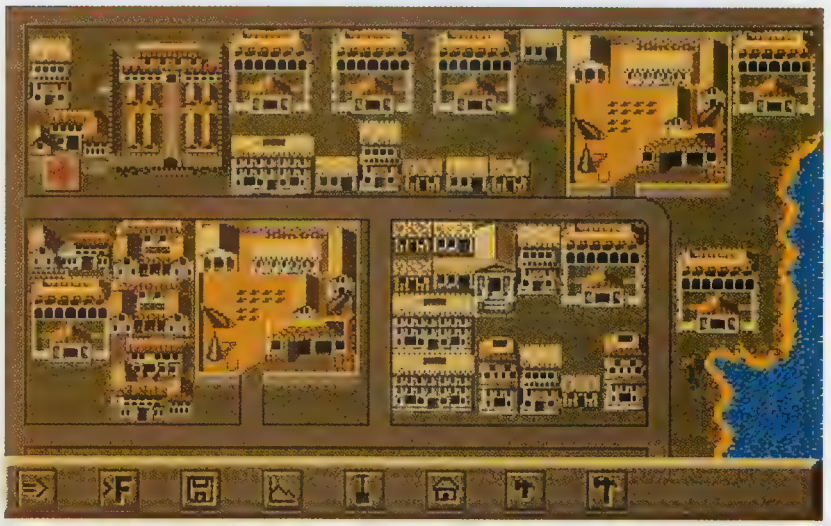
Barracks, available at the city level are the next best answer to solving the marauding issue. Not only can they keep the hungry Hun at arm's length but they are equally useful in thwarting unruly rioters. Unruly is to put it mildly once they find out that they are on the lion's menu for backpayment of taxes. Rioters can and will start fires and wreck buildings so it becomes essential that the riot be put down as quickly as possible. Remember the adage, 'Rome burned while Nero fiddled.'

Lastly, forts can be built on the provincial level. These lodgings are necessary for your cohorts, the prime method of dealing with the forkless devils.

Said cohorts can patrol the frontier in search of the barbarian hordes. Once located, both sides join for battle.

Warfare in **Caesar** comes in two flavors and would do Mars, the Roman God of War, proud. Impressions forthcoming **Cohort II** can be loaded into **Caesar** whereupon the player is dropped down to a miniatures-like version of a Roman wargame. Otherwise, the struggle reverts to a battle screen and is fought in rounds until one side or the other is victorious. The cohort's tactics include assault, flank, charge, form tortoise or retreat and strength bars measure the initial and remaining numbers of surviving troops. It's simple, but it works.

Promotion in **Caesar** comes when the overall rating reaches a certain level and when one's performance as a provincial governor meets certain minmium requirements. Each of four measurable categories (Peace, Culture, Prosperity and Empire) must be reached else the governor remains in his province. Promotion entails moving on to succeedingly more difficult provinces with even less Denarii to work with. Eventually, one may attain the rank of Emperor and have his seat of power in Rome itself!



Ad valorem

I was never a true **Sim City** aficionado. Once past the initial stages, it became more work than enjoyment. Not so with **Caesar** since the combat and promotional elements go a long way to sustaining one's palpability.

Throughout, the game's interface is simple although not without need for improvement. The best method comes in the form of the speedy 2-dimensional mouse, the keyboard being a little too clumsy for proper 'city-slicking.' The city level main toolbar situated at the bottom of the screen is accessed with a mouse click, with further subdivision of choices buried within each button. Unfortunately, it is this subdivision that can be not the least bit annoying. For instance, some hidden features fall under the 'infrastructure' button while others under 'construction.' A better method of delineating choices might have been Windows-like pull down menu with further sub-menus available via highlighting.

In light of the many Roman era games we can expect to deluge the marketplace in 1993, **Caesar** may have the best of all worlds going for it. Not only is there a thought-provoking simulation that can keep the best of us architects going for days without sleep, but with the upcoming **Cohort II** there is a fully compatible minatures-like wargame thrown in.❑

Rome: Pathway to Power

By Andrew Backer

Rome: The Pathway to Power is a short, but extremely funny adventure/strategy game. There are plenty of laughs in this hysterical, historical pastiche about coming to power in Ancient Rome. The 'pathway to power' is also historically accurate even if it is satirically and hysterically portrayed. Gamers not familiar with Ancient Roman history need only know that a slave could become a Citizen, and then in turn a Centurion, Senator, Second Consul, First Consul and finally the Emperor. This is the organizing engine in the game's six scenarios.

Mirabile dictu

Hector is the players alter ego in **Rome**. He begins as a slave: 'a dirty, vile, plague-ridden piece of human chattel,' but if the player successfully solves all of the scenarios, Hector becomes emperor of the Roman Empire! The manual states that the 'Roman Empire stands at the mercy of any ruthless, conniving, merciless bloodthirsty adventurers who think themselves capable of scheming, plotting and murdering their way to the ultimate prize--the Imperial Crown itself.' That's about the only clue needed to solve the various scenarios.

There are six adventures with a primary strategic problem to solve in each; the first such problem that needs solving is how to get out of town and go to Rome before Vesuvius erupts. Solve the problem by exploring, observing, conversing and using nimble fingers.

Rome doesn't have the usual adventure puzzles. There are almost no objects to find, no riddles to guess, and no mazes. Most of the solutions involve unethically or immorally manipulating fellow computer characters.

There are two strategy scenarios in which Hector must command troops. He has to capture the Celtic battle flag in Britain and he has to defeat Cleopatra's brother's army in Egypt.

Both scenarios involve making very simple strategic and tactical battle decisions. An intermediate gamer can easily solve each scenario and a beginner can solve them with experimentation.

The graphics and sound are not as spectacular as in some games, but they are still excellent. The primary view of the scenarios is three-quarters overhead and three-dimensional. Rome only includes a few aqueducts, some statues, flowing fountains, baths, taverns, a hostel, the Coliseum, Palace, Senate, Theater and Forum.

The scenarios have plenty of visual background detail, but the characters populating the city are simple animated cartoons, a bit too simple for my tatse. The characters all have several different tasks they accomplish every game day. They gamble, take baths, go to the Senate, the Coliseum, the Forum and the Theater, and chat about the events of the hour. Many of their conversations (seen in cartoon balloons) are extremely funny. They all have fictitious names (except Cleopatra). Gluteus Maximus is the emperor. Aqua Batix is the water-seller. Evangelicus is a Priest. Militarius Conflictus is a Centurion. Odius is a poet and Oscarus Wildus is a playwright.

There are several full color VGA portraits with some animation included, often as a reward or penalty for solving or not solving a scenario. A wonderful portrait of the beautiful Cleopatra appears after Hector defeats Ptolemy's army, for example. Cleopatra seems to promise more than gold as a reward when her bedroom eyes affirm an encounter of a horizontal nature with an animated, salacious wink.

The interface is simple and almost flawless. There are few click-on-button commands and even fewer menus. I experienced no difficulties at all in maneuvering Hector or his armies.

There is also an overhead map view of the whole scenario area. The player can quickly give mouse commands to go to different areas of the cities from this map or get a strategic view of the battlefields. The characters (including the enemy) appear as **Sim-City** like dots.

My only quarrel with the interface was with the save game feature. A game can be saved only once and that only when quitting the game. The saved position automatically loads on boot, but it is nerve wracking to be dependent on just the one save, especially in an adventure game.

The user manual is short but entertaining and written in six languages. The game can be set up to play in either English, French, Spanish, Italian or German. (Maxis is only the publisher. First Light, an English design team, created it.) Because **Rome** is simple and short (I finished it in two days), expert players who like challenging puzzle adventures or complicated strategy games will probably be quite disappointed. I was not disappointed, however, I was absolutely delighted. I laughed and laughed. Many funny things happened on the way to the forum! ❑

Designed by
First Light

Published by
Maxis

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PC

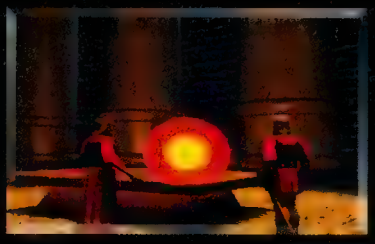
Supports
SoundBlaster, Roland & Ad-lib

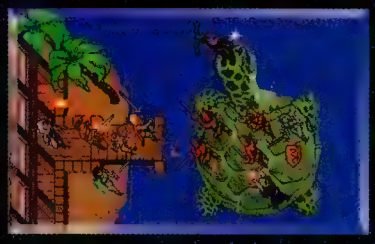
Graphics
VGA

Ultima® VII

PART TWO

SERPENT ISLE™





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Reader Service No. 4

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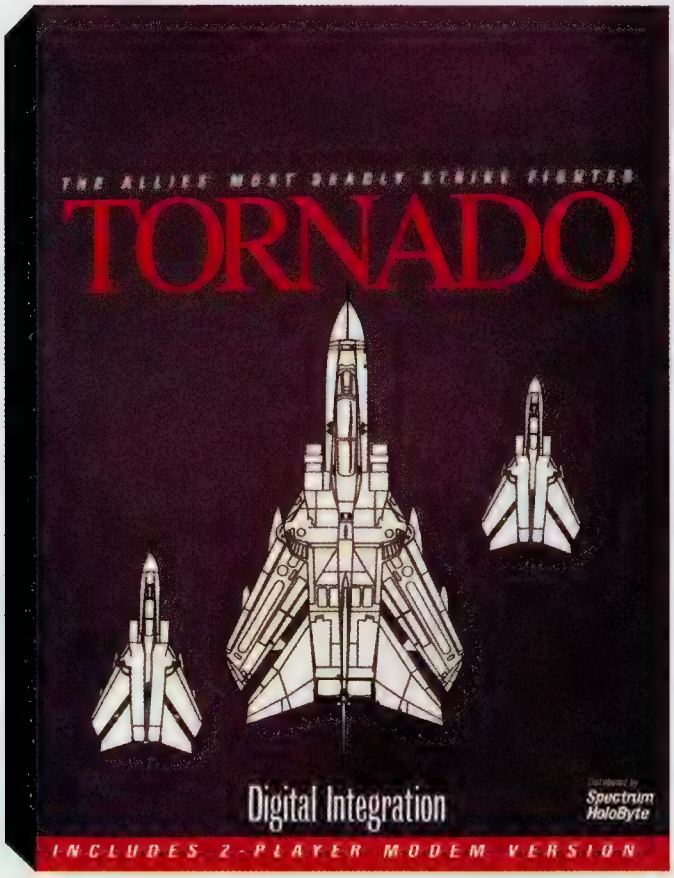

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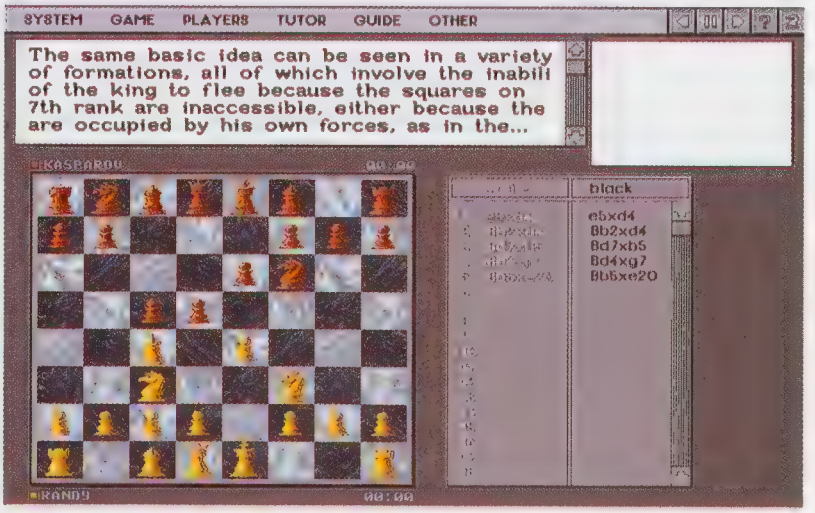
Reader Service No. 6

'Don't Be Stupid'

...is not how one would normally address one's opponent. But supposing it were less than human. Supposing that, gasp, its intelligence were... *artificial!!!* John Van Valer investigates some very grey matter

Computer wargames have made tremendous progress in terms of playability, interface, and overall design in the past few years. Yet, for many players, the computer opponent included in these games is woefully lacking in both overall challenge and even basic manipulation of forces. How can this be? With 486 and 040 based computers with lots of RAM and hard disk space, why can't a computer opponent play a good game or even exhibit some understanding of basic game strategies? Everyone knows that there are computer chess players capable of playing at Grand Master levels.


SYSTEM GAME PLAYERS TUTOR GUIDE OTHER
The same basic idea can be seen in a variety of formations, all of which involve the inabil of the king to flee because the squares on 7th rank are inaccessible, either because the are occupied by his own forces, as in the...
KASPAROV
00:00
black
e5xd4
Bb2xd4
Bd7xb5
Bd4xg7
Bb5xe20
RANDY
00:00
Chess: brute force

Deep thoughts

Let's start by examining the demands on the computer opponent or artificial intelligence (AI) for a game of chess and a typical wargame. Chess has 32 pieces, 64 possible locations for pieces, and 6 different types of pieces. The rules are highly restrictive and fairly short. Combat, movement, and victory conditions are also very straightforward. All game information is available to both players.

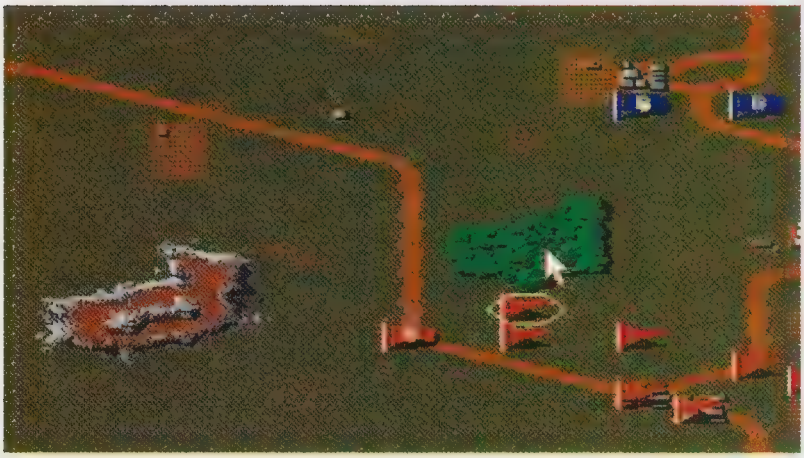
By contrast, a wargame may involve hundreds or even thousands of pieces, at least a few hundred different locations for pieces, many types of pieces, lengthy and detailed rules with numerous conditions and exceptions, and also has different types of terrain that have a serious effect on gameplay. In addition, the combat and movement systems tend to be very dense. Victory conditions can be complex and may even be conditional on other outcomes during the course of the game. Pieces may be hidden and rarely does one side have a complete set of information about the other.

When a chess AI processes a move, it has limited set of options to consider relative to the number options it would have in most computer wargames.

The chess AI programmers have volumes of detailed chess strategies and moves to use as a programming resource for both overall game strategy and individual moves. Because of this, they don't have to be a chess expert to write a good chess AI. Most chess programs simply crunch through as many known moves and responses as possible to determine an appropriate move - the brute force approach.

Not surprisingly, as computers of all types have become more and more powerful, chess programs have become more and more sophisticated in their play. Yet, high-level human players can still be the best computer chess programs, despite the advances in technology.

For the wargame AI programmer, the task is far more daunting. When the AI prepares to process a move, it must deal with moving many, not one, pieces, multiple objectives, terrain, and numerous other considerations. The total number



The Perfect General: small scale

of options the computer has to process is almost limitless. And what player wants to wait five, ten, thirty, sixty minutes or more for the computer to process its move for just one turn or even one phase of a turn! The vast majority of players will wait a few minutes, at best, for the AI before becoming frustrated and moving on to a more interactive game. SSI's **Computer Ambush** was a good concept, but it took the AI at least thirty minutes just to process a turn. Who has that kind of time to spend playing a game? Most board wargamers moved to computer wargames because they were easier to play and less time consuming.

Chess is complex

As we have seen, wargames are generally far more complex than chess and do not have libraries full of theory on gameplay. To make matters even more difficult, there is no generic AI that will work for all wargames. A basic chess AI can be modified and re-used between chess programs. Most wargames are significantly different in their design, scale, subject, victory conditions, etc. that such 'modular' AI is impossible.

Even if it were possible, significant considerations would prevent it from being transferred between competitive game publishers. It would be proprietary knowledge. Three-Sixty, for example, has been able to re-use some of its AI in the **V for Victory** series because of the similarity between the game systems and scale in each installment, but they are certainly not about to make that AI available to other, competitive, publishers of operational level wargames.

The creative approach

Chess AI has been researched and developed by both academic and commercial interests for decades. Wargame publishers and programmers do not have the luxury of such development time. At best, the programming team of a handful of individuals has twelve to eighteen months to design, develop, and complete an entire computer wargame, of which the AI is just one piece.

The wargame publisher needs to get their product out the door and on store shelves in order to stay in business, not engage in time consuming and, therefore, costly AI research. For better or worse, most wargames sell because of their subject, design, and interface, not the AI.

Aside from a very small scale and relatively simple wargame (such as QQP's **The Perfect General**), there is simply too much information for current AI algorithms to process in an acceptable amount of time and still offer a strong player a challenging game. And that's if a programmer can even create and code an algorithm that doesn't just rely on number crunching, but uses a rules-based or an heuristic system to develop and implement strategic and tactical operations. In effect, 'learn' how to react to a human opponent.

Of course the programmer could try and avoid unnecessary sophistication by programming the AI to follow one of several overall game strategies (as Gary Grigsby did in **Pacific War**). The average player will be challenged for a short time, but will eventually learn all the AI plans and develop appropriate counter-measures.

This approach is also very vulnerable to the creative player that does something the programmer never expected. A Japanese invasion of the Western U.S. or a U.S. invasion of Japan on the first turn of **Pacific War** version 1.0 is a good example of this. Developing more comprehensive strategies and rules for wargame AI require the programmer to account for every possible strategy or tactic a player could devise - clearly an impossible task.

Over the hill

Avalon Hill's (AH) computer version of **Third Reich** had one of the worst computer AI's in recent memory. In theory, this would be a good game to follow a pre-planned strategy approach for its AI as there is quite a bit of material available discussing **Third Reich** strategy, plus the fact that its combat system is predictable enough that the game can indeed be very chess-like in play.

In practice, however, the game is sufficiently complex that there are still a number of possible player strategies that would be missed during the AI programming, leaving the computer opponent very weak for veteran players. To be sure, the programmer could use the existing knowledge base of gameplay to try and counter new strategies, but this ends up requiring more computer processing time. The inevitable result is the appearance of the aforementioned undesirable waiting periods for the AI between turns. A computer version of such a game needs a strong developer to balance these issues and software development has not been one of AH's strengths.

Military intelligence (?)

But what about using the sophisticated AI algorithms the AI researchers have been working on for years? Or even those used in simulations for the U.S. Department of Defense? Certainly a powerful 486 PC should be able to handle those algorithms, shouldn't it? Unfortunately, most AI researchers use AI specific languages for their programs, not C, C++, or Assembler that many game developers use.

For the most part, these AI languages aren't even available for PC platforms and, even when they are, they

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Reader Service No. 110

Civilization: cheat shock!

aren't commercially viable in that they produce very inefficient code, utilize lots of CPU horsepower, and are simply very costly to implement. Not to mention the fact that the game programmer would need to be familiar the particular AI language to begin with.

As with the chess AI problem, these algorithms have also grown over the years to demand the current high-end hardware platforms and operating systems, far beyond what a 486 and DOS can offer. They are also designed to solve very specific and well-defined problems, not the type of problems facing a wargame AI designer.

You cheat!

Despite all this, there are some complex games, not necessarily wargames, that have been very popular and offer players a significant challenge. **Populous**, **RailRoad Tycoon**, and **Civilization**, are good examples. Unfortunately, the computer opponents for these games are successful because they cheat or can do things that the human player is not allowed to do. The player is never told that the computer opponent is cheating. Once found out, most players are resentful towards the game designer and the overall enjoyment of the game is ruined. Such deception allows the designer to short-cut the AI development process - probably because they weren't strong enough programmers to solve the problem at hand.

Yet, the enjoyment from these games comes mostly from their design, not their AI in the first place. Players care more about game design than AI. Who wants to play a boring or ill-conceived game not matter how good the computer opponent is? Even with poor AI, the **V for Victory** series would remain popular because the design is so strong and does almost everything else on a computer wargamer's wish list. Most players derive their enjoyment from simply exploring the design during gameplay, not from playing a computer opponent that they cannot beat.

The human league

Overall, it appears that a good wargame AI would be closer to a good bridge AI, rather than one from chess. How many strong computer bridge AIs are available? Virtually none. Without competent AI, there is no point playing computer bridge.

Fortunately for computer wargames, good game design can make up for a weak AI. When a good bridge AI is written, there will be more hope for more challenging wargame AIs, but that probably won't be anytime soon, even with more powerful PCs just around the corner.

Until that time, wargame developers will concentrate on even stronger game designs and enhanced modem, network, and e-mail play. Coupled with the new designs, these communications features will make it far easier and less cumbersome for players everywhere to play against each other and not have to rely on computer opponents. Humans have not been replaced, yet. It would be nice, however, to replace the marketing types that continue to make wild and unrealistic claims about the computer AI in their products.❑

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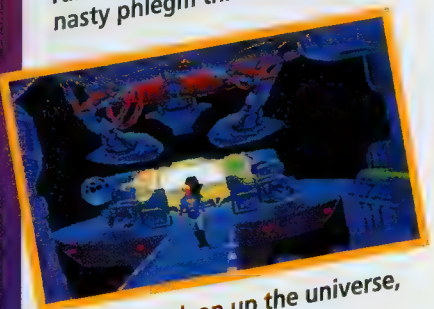

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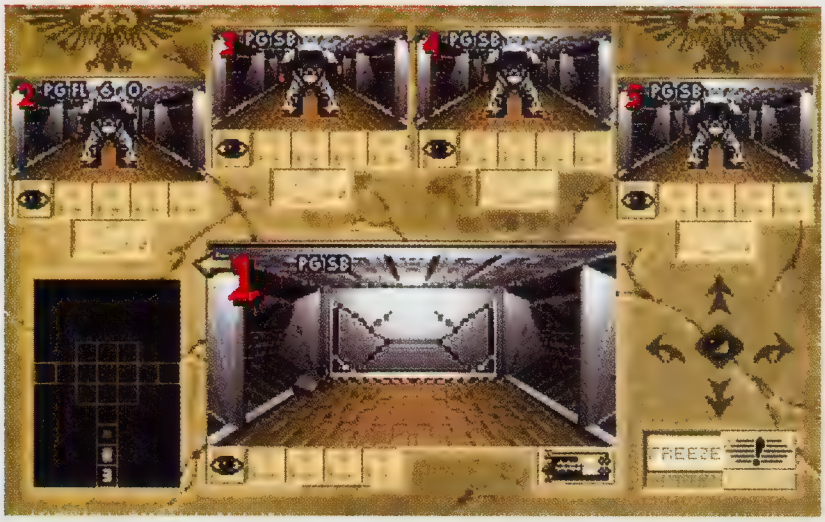
Space Hulk

By Brian Walker



Games Workshop are one of the few consistently successful boardgame company's catering to anything other than the family market. Their prosperity has been based upon producing colorful fantasy based versions of skirmish level miniature game systems. By way of a variant on this theme, they would occasionally stray into the area of science fiction. One of the results of such a drift was **Space Hulk**, itself a clone of the *Alien* movies. Inevitably then, a computer version was just a matter of time.

Imperious

Space Hulk was programmed in the UK by the estimable Nick '**Imperium**' Wilson, aided by several Games Workshop alumni. The manual features a lot of background waffle, but the premise of the game is simple: the player-controlled Terminators board the hulks of wrecked spacecraft on search and destory missions aimed at the Genestealers who inhabit them. The Genestealers, for their part, attempt to live up to their name.

The action occurs in real-time with a freeze-time option. The latter is not quite the same as 'pause.' Players receive a limited amount of freeze-time, the meter starts ticking as soon as this mode is entered. When all the available freeze-time has been used up play is continiuous. It may be deduced then, that the game is designed to appeal to the fast of hand as well as the fast of mind, in this, **Space Hulk** betrays its European roots; attracted by the 'prestigious' reputation of strategy games, yet unable to leave the arcades completely behind.

Dead or alive

The Terminators usually carry two weapons; typically a storm bolter and a close range weapon. Unusually for a game of this type, the close range weapon fires automatically when in perilous situations. The combat system does not fanny around with concepts like 'wounded,' or 'pinned.' Dead or alive are the only outcomes here.

Sixteen missions are provided, plus there is campaign game and several tutorials. In the missions, weapons and squad are pre selected by the Emperor, only in the campaign game may these be customized. To provide a flavor of the missions, here's how the manual describes the one for Tech Support which, I might add, does not involve the blowing away of selected software company employees:

'The righteous cleansing of our flames was not enough. The evil lives on. Our Imperial Commanders have instructed Tech Marines to aid us in the destruction of the Genestealers. A squad of Tech Marines has assessed the target areas - their conclusion was that high explosives must be used. Unfortunately their armor does not allow them passage through the Hulk. Under your command a squad of Terminators must once again enter the level and place an explosive charge in each gene bank. With the destruction of this area we will seal the Genestealers fate.'

Players are placed in the role of an all-seeing commander issuing orders to their beleaguered units, though a first person perspective is possible once the grunts get going. The main screen is likely to be the planning map because it offers the ability to see around corners.

The Terminators are represented by numbers and can be moved by arrow keys on the keyboard and activated by hot keys or mouse. The interface throughout the game has been designed for maximum convenience.

Space Hulk invades the gaming territory currently occupied by the **Breach** series and **Tegel's Mercenaries**. The pace of the game is double that of both combined, but then so is the atmosphere. The opening screens are stunning both graphically and aurally. Sound is used brilliantly throughout - each scenario has a spoken introduction providing the right sound card is in place.

The artwork is splendid, too, but suffers from the relatively low resolution 320x200 256 color VGA. The missions are varied enough to provide extended gameplay and like the boardgame, there will undoubtedly be more to come. The only reservation must be about the type of game that it is, for there is no question that what it does it does superbly.❑

Original design by
Richard Halliwell

Programmed by
Nick Wilson

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
PC, Amiga

PC system requirements
286/12, 8.5 mb hard disk space, 580k base RAM, EMS if sound required

Supports
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Actual cockpit shown.

Actual F-15 Strike Eagle III cockpit screen shot shown.

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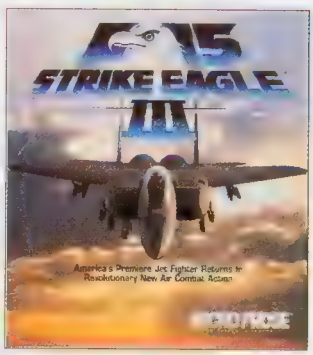

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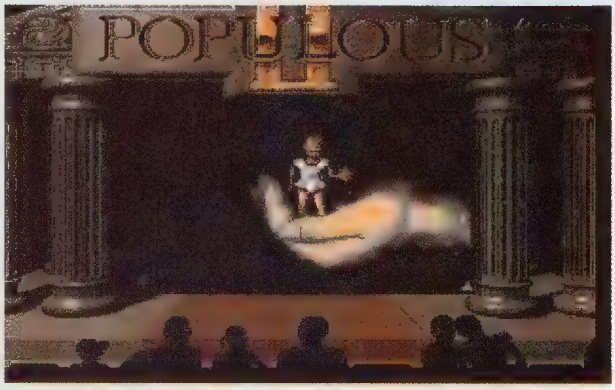
God Told Me To

Alex Trowers relays the word on strategy in Populous II

The start is possibly the most important aspect of the game. A good start is vital. If possible, 'sprog' the first house immediately. Each time a flag appears on screen, sprog the house. On early grassland levels it is possible to sprog before the flag is above ground level.

If sprogging isn't possible then don't make castles. Castles take too long to fill up. Instead, make a series of mounds that people where people can settle without their houses getting too big. Even if sprogging is allowed, then don't go for castles straight away; wait until two screens of small buildings have been acquired.

For maximum land flattening ability, find an area of sea and raise a point twice before lowering that same point, three mouse clicks will achieve what would normally take nine. At the very start of the game don't bother lowering the final point, these will create the mounds for settlers.



An eye for an eye

Getting the first 'effect' in is very important. Initial effects should be cheap, but devastating. A whirlwind planted on the enemy coast will cause one's opponent lots of problems due to whirlpool damage. At this point in the game it's not worth saving up for more expensive effects, 'storm' should be the most expensive aimed for.

When entering enemy territory, take two 'lightnings' to plant. This enables concentration on one's own building while the effect gathers pace. Lightning is preferred over swamps (too easy to clear up) and fire columns (too inaccurate). Stick to whirlwinds over the sea, and storms in heavily populated areas.

The appearance of two or three screen worth of castles announce the mid-point in the game. Every house built should now be turned into a castles as soon as possible, and the usage of effects tailored to a specific battle plan. Don't just throw any old effect in at random, think about what, where, and how it will affect the big picture.

The eight wonders...

Whirlpools and whirlwinds: these should be placed on the coast of enemy lands, or in pools inside the lands themselves. If an internal pool can support a whirlpool then plant one immediately. Enemy leaders should be placed in whirlwinds to reduce their technology level and carry them away (the 'we're not in Kansas anymore' effect). When the target of a whirlpool, build up lands, fill in the pools, and pray.

Swamps: only really useful for killing an enemy hero or leader, unless funds are available to totally 'swampify' his land. Alternatively, lay a road leading to a swamp and watch his settling walkers trot right into it and die. Squelch! To remove swamps it is probably best to constantly raise and lower the land. Extensive swamps require the use of verdant.

Fire Columns: by itself, a fire column is a pathetic effect and easy to destroy (lower it into the water), but when used in conjunction with the 'plant tree' effect it become a lethal weapon. Plant lots of trees in enemy land and then when they are developed, 'light blue touch paper and retire.' This effect is capable of wiping out half of the enemy population depending on how much 'treeing-up' was done beforehand.

Tidal waves: definitely right up there with the all-time big effects. However, the wave possesses the aquatic equivalent of 'friendly fire' in it's ability to destroy it's own. To utilize the ability of the tidal wave without committing suicide requires the use of the 'rail gun' principle: make a small 'u' shape in the land that has one water block inside it. Place the tidal wave inside this 'u' and it will move only in the direction of the 'u', thus protecting the home island (always providing it was aimed in the right direction).

When confronted by an incoming tidal wave the only thing to do is panic, but at the same time try to raise a land

Populous II

Designed by
Bullfrog

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
PC, Amiga, ST

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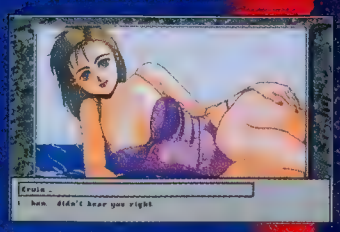
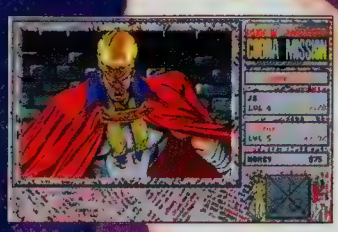
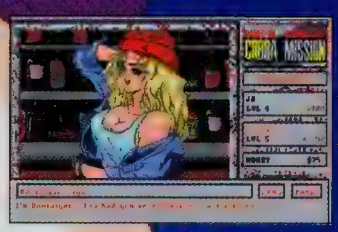


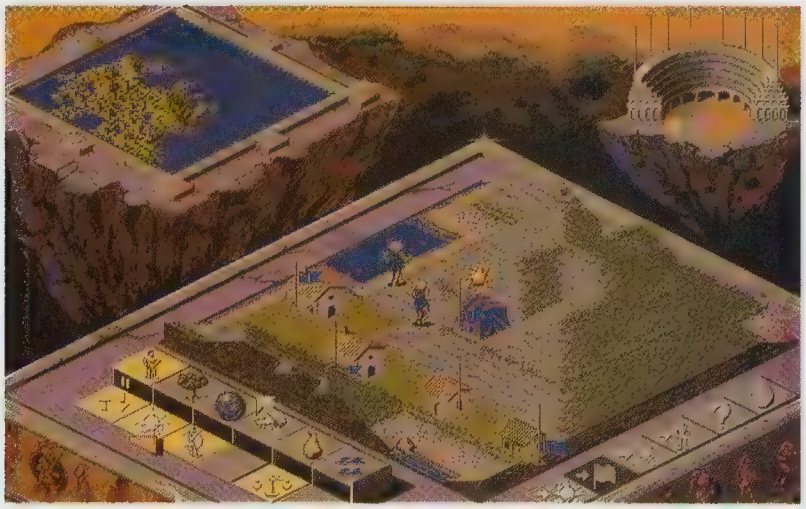


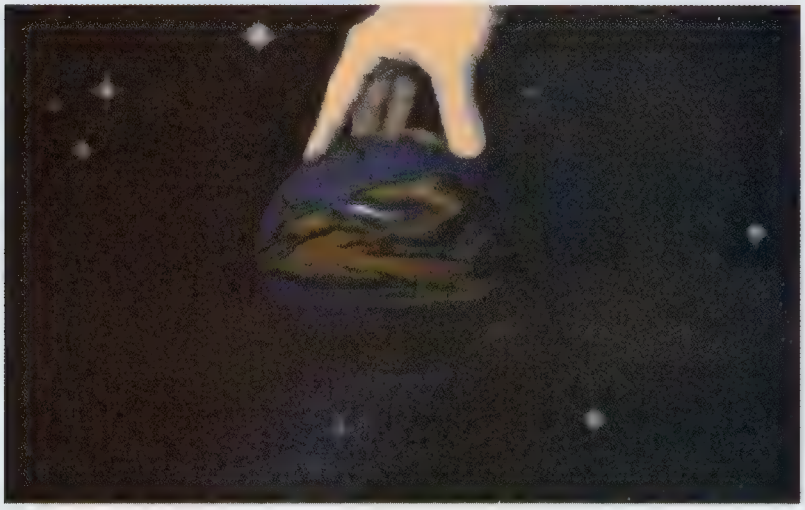


System requirements: 386 or faster machine with 640K RAM hard disk with min. 11 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended). Sound support: Sound Blaster, Thunder Board, Pro Audio Spectrum and Adlib.

R This game is not for the faint-hearted. It contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors under 18.

MEGATECH





wall in its path, preferably one longer than the wave itself. It's all a bit hit and miss. Strips of basalt stretched out along the sea will stop some tidal waves. However, these take time and may infringe upon expansion. Also, if the tidal wave is longer than the basalt then it's goodnight Charlie!

Volcanoes: the best places to start volcanoes are either over the enemy papal magnet where he is building a leader, or over an area of land that he has just been working on. (Not much good in a solo game, but it *really* annoys human opponents.)

Lower volcanoes immediately. The only way to remove the residual basalt is to use verdant or lightning.

Earthquakes

Wind: before using wind, make sure that none of the troops are beyond the line of the wind. When the wind kicks in, then lay a series of swamps or earthquakes behind the enemy. His population will then be blown into the swamps and killed. Major squelch! Baptismal fonts may also be used, but this is risky if the land is too close to the end of the map.

An alternative is that when a lot of the land is flat use the 'steam press' tactic. Create a castle wall that stretches the entire width of one's land and place the wind so that it blows the wall into the enemy land. This won't harm the enemy's people, but when the wind has finished his land area will be substantially reduced. There is no real defence against wind except to blow in the opposite direction.

Simple rules

Fungus: this effect is only really useful when there is a large expanse of flat land, so should therefore only be used towards the end of the game. It works on the principle of 'life'. Briefly, life follows these simple rules: if any cell is adjacent to two or three other cells then it will survive. Any other amount of cells mean that it will die due to either isolation or overcrowding. If three cells are adjacent to a blank square then a new cell will be born. Using these roles it is possible to create patterns that perform several tasks. In the **Populous** world it is possible to make 'bomb' patters that explode and spread fungus everywhere; 'glider' patters that fly in one of eight directions; 'assassin' patterns destroy a single enemy house leaving no traces. There are lots more patterns, but they will require experimentation to be used effectively.

Defensively, try to catch the fungus before it starts to develop, this way it can be killed easily by raising and lowering land. If an attempt is made to kill the fungus when it is in development, then problems may be experienced and unpredictable things happen. Best to raise a series of points before lowering them all.

Earthquakes: these are ideal for killing the enemy leader (if playing against the computer). Wait until he is over his magnet and protected, and then hit him with earthquake. Always make sure that it is pointing towards the enemy population and not home territory. The computer player will move his magnet to the castle and his leader will follow into the 'quake. Lower earthquakes immediately. Trying to raise them in the early stage of development will simply lower the land again.

Plague: when putting an enemy's house to plague, try to plant one of the seeds of fungus beside it. This will reduce the house size and thus force the plague ridden inhabitants out and so spread the disease. There is no defence against plague except killing all the infected people. One risky tactic is to pile all the plague people into baptismal fonts and transfer the problem to the opponent. Alternatively, try transforming the plagued ones into a single leader and then a hero. A plague ridden population is something that cannot be tolerated.

Heroes: always pick the right hero for the job. If the whole game has been spent swamping enemy land, then it is pointless sending out Achilles. The following is a 'horses for courses' guide to heroes:

Achilles: enemy land covered in forests, lava streams, fire columns.

Odysseus: enemy land covered in storms, or when the enemy needs to be attacked quickly.

Adonis: enemy land covered in swamps or fungus. Enemy population *must* be small when sending out lover boy.

Hercules: enemy land covered in earthquakes.

Perseus: Good all-round hero. Useful if enemy has a light covering of several ground-based effects.

Helen: anytime there are no baptismal fonts on enemy

land. Unlike other heroes, Helen should be created when the leader is very weak.

Finally, try to catch the enemy leader before he is turned into a hero. If he makes a hero, however, try lightning or drowning him when water is fatal.

Castle Walls, while fairly ineffective in the early stages, can create a *formidable* barrier for the enemy to cross towards the end of the game. Whenever an enemy settlement has been captured, then extend the walls to surround the new acquisition. This way the enemy will not have chance to recapture lost settlements. To knock down walls use effects like earthquakes and storms. If walking through the 'gap' is intended, make sure that the earthquakes have been tidied up with verdant.

Burnt land

Always make more land. Try to tidy up the land as progress is made. Get rid of any rocks or burnt land. This is very important after the beginning of the game.

Target enemy leaders or enemy heroes. Heroes must be killed immediately. Wait until a leader is turned into an enemy hero before killing him. This may be a bit risky as there are no clues as to what sort of hero he is going to become, but at least it wastes a lot of the enemy's mana. If *Armageddon* occurs and it looks like a loss is on the cards, hit the area that enemy heroes must cross with swamps, earthquakes, or stable fungus patterns.

When playing a custom game, access to effects is normally limited to those attained in the conquest worlds. To play a custom game with all the effects select THEMAB as the conquest world, cancel, and then select the custom game. Eureka! All the effects should now be available. Entering KABOODLE should also give access to all effects. Doing this in a conquest game will revert it back to a custom game. Amen.❑

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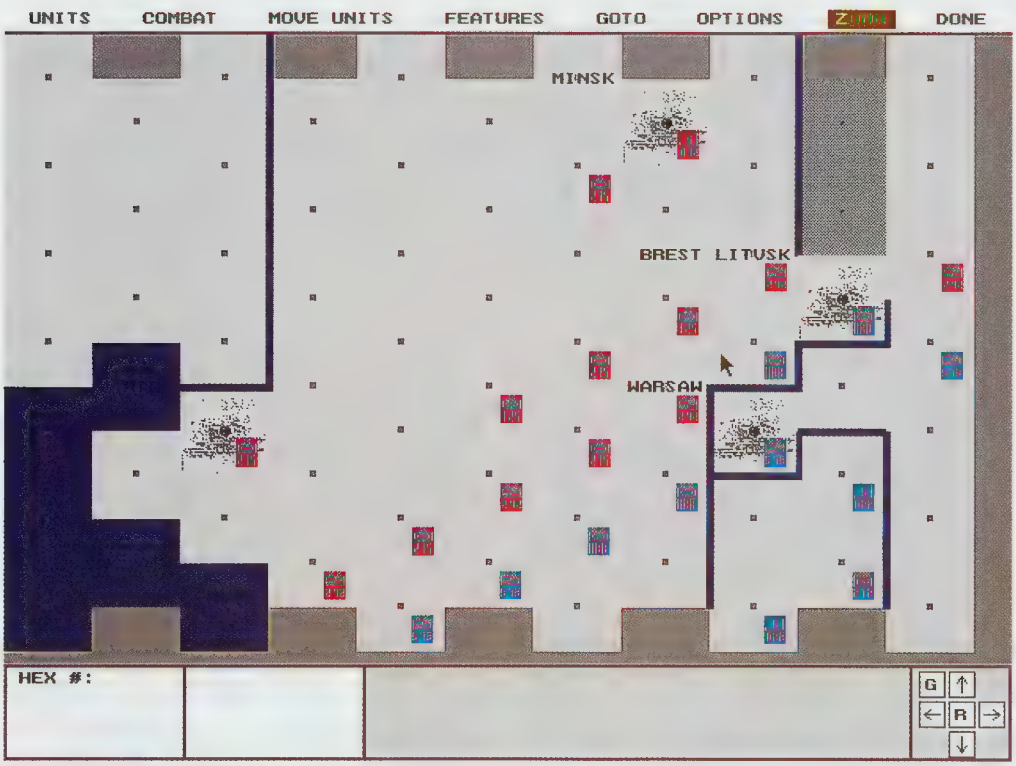
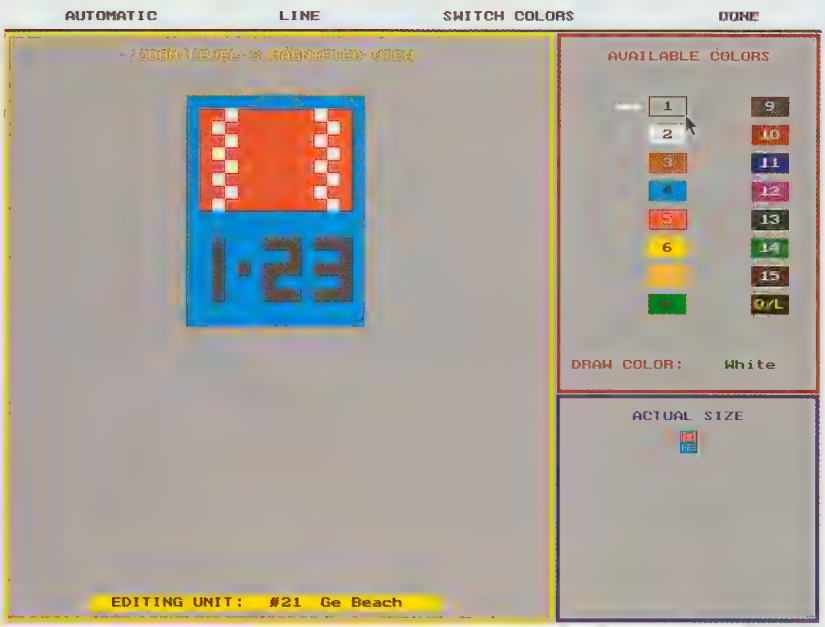
Aide de Camp

By Kevin Warne





Designed by
Scott Hamilton

Published by
HPS Simulations

Systems
IBM PC

System requirements
600k free RAM

Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse, keyboard

Notes
Owing to the amount of free RAM required, use of DOS 5.0 or 6.0 is recommended. No computer opponent is provided

The masterstroke panzer drive on Moscow stopped short by the paw of the family cat; the finest assault troops blown off Utah beach by an opened window; the greatest ever campaign success halted in its tracks by the ultimate order from High Command: 'Clear that rubbish away, I need to lay the table for dinner.'

These are the recurring nightmares of the hex board wargamer. For some, just distant memories, for others, an ever present reality. It is for these poor tormented souls that Scott Hamilton and HPS Simulations have created **Aide de Camp** (**ADC**).

Aide de Camp is not a game, it is a software package to transfer a hex board wargame onto a computer file to save playing space, or for play by mail or modem.

The user selects the terrain features for the map, creates the unit counters for the opposing forces, then the map itself before finally placing the units on the map ready for play.

ADC can be run on a PC with a 640 x 480 VGA display and requires at least 600K of free RAM, the RAM being an ever present constraint on the size of the game as this is consumed in small amounts by each created terrain feature, unit, and hex on the map. The RAM problems are exacerbated by the lack of support for EMS. Memory restrictions aside, the designer claims **ADC** can supply 200 terrain types and create maps up to 30,000 hexes. The supplied tutorial and two other sets provide some forty or so terrain types and around sixty unit types all of which can be easily copied and edited. Simply changing the color of the units is enough for most games as infantry and tank icons are fairly standard within wargames.

The supplied units occupy a quarter of a hex, but starting from scratch the units can be made any size up to a hex size. The bigger the unit the more memory it consumes.

The map can be viewed at three zoom levels - sitting down at the table close-up; standing up; and the squint through the door at the top of the stairs with counters about the size of a pinhead. When creating a terrain type or unit, a different display is required for each level, with the editor providing plenty of scope to change color and design.

This allows terrain features to be suppressed at any level to enhance other features. This can also be done for unit counters. Standard terrain types are provided and these can be overlaid with

secondary terrain features and assigned hex attributes so that, for example, a mountain hex can be wooded and contain an oilfield.

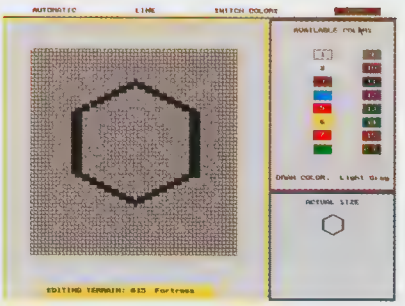
My first test was to load an old SPI game called **Barbarossa**, a simulation of the Eastern Front. The attractions of the game for this purpose were the four terrain types, the small map of less than 700 hexes, and the paltry 14 different unit types. Despite its simplicity Barbarossa includes most of the standard hex board wargame features such as stacking limits, supply, unit breakdown, zones of control, air support, a second movement phase, a standard combat results table and terrain effects on combat.

Copying the sample terrain and unit types and using the editor to amend them proved very easy at all three zoom levels. As in all do-it-yourself kits, preparation is everything; to use **ADC** to its full potential requires some forethought about the terrain and unit types, their design, and the map creation. Each time I returned to the game construction I found a further refinement to improve the appearance. My final attempt still needed more work but given the time taken - less than eight hours - I was satisfied.

The second game I tried was SPI's **Dreadnought**, a hex based naval wargame of the 1906-1945 battleship era. No problems with the terrain, and the editor gave me some reasonable counters. A small game was created in less than two hours and a slightly larger one in around three, the copying of already created counters greatly speeding up the process.

When assigning the units to the map to start play, up to six values can be assigned to each counter such as Attack, Defence and Movement. All counters on the board then have the same values so that in combat **ADC** adds the respective values together to help determine combat odds. For example if value #1 is attack and value #2 defence, then when a combat is initiated the combined value #1 of the attacking counters is shown (as are the values for #2,#3 and so on) and the same for the defence. This helps the player calculate the combat odds.

ADC transfers the board and counters to the computer. This allows movement of the counters and provides the limited assistance in calculating the combat odds before storing all moves and combat



result for that turn. The turn counter is advanced and the next turn commences.

The program is fairly cumbersome to use, a point accepted by the designer as the penalty for flexibility, so to use **ADC** properly will require planning and patience. Give me another six months and a monster game like Avalon Hill's **D-Day**, and I might be able to do the package justice. But in advance of such a landmark being reached, I would recommend the program to all board wargamers. I just hope that, given games like Three Sixty's **V for Victory** series, the average wargamer's requirements haven't moved on.❑

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GO is played by two oponents who alternate play black or white stones on the vacant intersections of a grid attempting to surround empty points while also thwarting one another.

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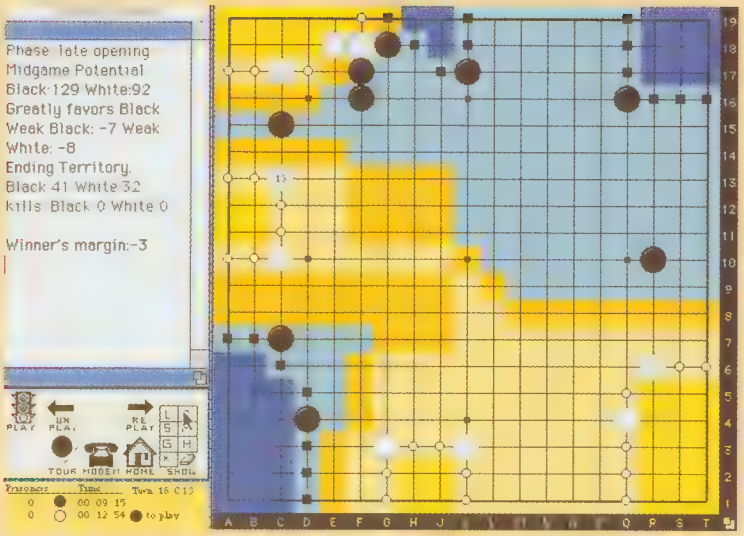

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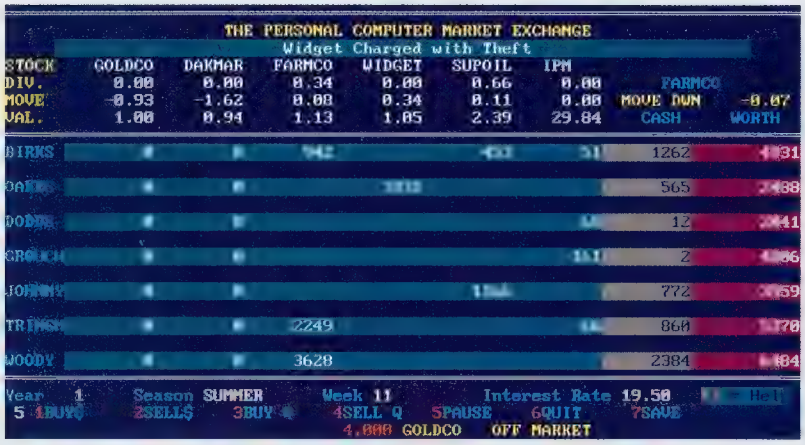
MARKET FORCE$

One little piggy went to market, one little piggy stayed home.
The little piggy called John Harrington played two financial sims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For a card carrying pinko commie sympathiser, I have an inappropriate penchant for business games. These mainly come in two types: the stock market game and the run-your-own-business simulation. This was my lucky month for one game of each type turned up. The first is a DOS based no frills shareware trading game, and the other is a glossy GUI business simulation.

Clarion Investor is a rarity; a multi-player game which can be played with all players present at the terminal throughout the game. Up to seven players compete to become richest brat on the block, trading in six securities of varying volatility. The game has but one screen display, which resembles a spreadsheet. This displays each player's current portfolio, plus current cash and total worth.

Prime butt

Along the top of the screen is a panel wherein are displayed news flashes, whilst at the bottom is the current Prime Rate for those panty-waists who prefer to keep their money in CD's (Certificates of Deposit) rather than risk it in the biggest casino in the world: the stock exchange.

The newsflashes are the core of the game. They can either be security specific ('Widget Manufacturing unveils new product') or general ('Government announces balanced budget' - the game must be set in the next century). The trick is to interpret how each news flash will affect the stocks, each of which has its own quirks, some of which are intertwined. For instance, the price of gold has an effect both on Goldco (a gold dealing company) and the Dakmar - the currency of the African country of Dakland which relies on gold exports for foreign currency.

Each newsflash represents a rumour, rather than an actual fact, so there is no guarantee that a security price will react on the news, although if the same rumour turns up several times then the chances of it doing so increase. It would seem therefore that success would be largely a matter of luck, but at the higher difficulty levels the newsflashes really do flash by and it is the player best able to multi-task and make quick decisions who is most likely to do well. Knowing when a stock is bombed out and due for recovery, and differentiating it from one which is about to go bust, is the difference between coining it in and, as we say in Britain, 'doing your bollocks.'

Trade flap

The interface is crude but effective, with just four key strokes needed to enter trades. The programmer has had the revolutionary idea of players using the numeric keypad to type in numbers, rather than requiring them to click the mouse several hundred times on a minuscule numeric dial. The multi-player nature of the game can lead to seven sets of fingers pounding the keypad simultaneously, but this can be resolved by appointing a referee and laying down some ground rules on when players can and cannot trade.

Clarion Investor is likely to lead to riotous fun if played with the right crowd, especially if played for money. Unfortunately it is massively overpriced at just under $50 for the full version. This registration fee can be earned back many times over through commission under the pyramid selling style distribution scheme advocated by Clarsoft. Although the scheme is entirely legal it smacks somewhat of the unacceptable face of capitalism.

Sim pig

The title of **Capitalist Pig** suggests a game which revels in cut throat commercial activities, but it is in fact a rather studious business simulation. It's a solitaire game without

Clarion Investor

Published by
Clarsoft Systems

Systems
PC

Available from
Box 662, Okotoks, Alberta, Canada, T0L 1T0, Price $49.95 (US)

Players
1-7

Notes
Shareware version downloadable from Clarion's Screen Board at (403) 938-6537 (8n1) and CompuServe (Other Games Library in the Gamer's Forum)

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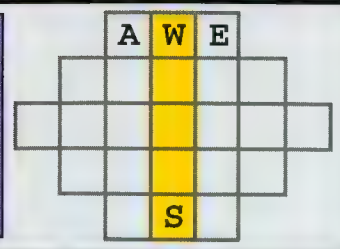
How to win: Can you solve the puzzle below? It looks very simple but it's only the start (most won't even try!). Each puzzle gets a little harder. But this time it's all up to you. Stay in to the end with the highest score and you win! Do you have what it takes? Try your hand and see.

Directions: Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with the correct words (going across) that spell out the Mystery Word down the middle. Hint: use the mystery word clue.

In the future: There will be four more puzzles at $2.00 each and one tie-breaker at $1.50. You will have three weeks to solve each puzzle (suspense is part of the game!). We don't know how many people will enter but typically 47% will advance through Phase I, 30% through Phase II, 25% through Phase III, and 20% through Phase IV. The tie-breaker determines the winner. If players are still tied they will each receive the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid



WORD LIST

FRONT	ZOO	LINKS	ACE	MIGHT
ASK	TABLE	FIT	GAMES	THE
NEBULAR	RUNNING	CAPTAIN	TRILOGY	CARRIER
SPACE	AWE	ROGUE	FAR	PRINT
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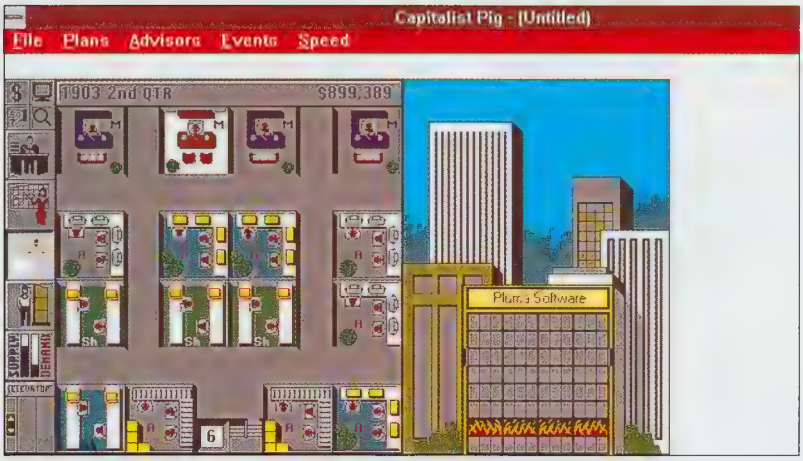

even computer opponents to compete against. The player manages a company in a player-defined fiscal environment. Thus, if one decides the company manufactures a product which appeals to all age groups, all income bands and which sells equally well in boom or recession then, so be it. For some reason the name 'Sim Pig' springs to mind here.

At the start of the game the player draws up three plans: the Business Plan, the Financial Plan and the Marketing Plan. The Business Plan defines the company's product: who will buy it, how it is produced and how sales are affected by external market conditions such as recession or rampant inflation.

The Financial Plan outlines desired profit margins, employee remuneration and other items likely to affect cash flow. The Marketing Plan, as one would expect, determines how the product is marketed; what form of advertising to use, what features of the product to emphasise and the mode of distribution.

All three plans can (and should) be amended throughout the course of the game. There are few restrictions imposed so that, for instance, the player's company may insist on taking up to 90 days to pay its own bills whilst demanding immediate payment of its own invoices. In effect, the game engine is a cheat's dream but equally it is also very suitable for a role-playing approach as well as the more obvious academic approach.

Strategy minus

I tended towards a role-playing style, first trying out one company (named Strategy Minus) with a Scrooge like policy towards employees before switching to a 'we pay top dollar' organisation (*and pigs might fly - Ed*). The latter had far less strikes and far less money!

Later I had a lot of fun with the Bog Standard Company who manufactured toilets built to last. The drawback of emphasising durability as a unique selling point, I reasoned, was the lack of replacement sales and so after thirty very successful years I made things a bit tougher for myself by adjusting a Market Condition variable so that sales only picked up during a healthy economic climate.

With the master plans in place, attention switches to the day to day running of the company. This takes place in the main screen display which consists of a number of office floor plans. Each floor contains sixteen offices into which are placed various employee types: managers, salespersons, assemblers, packers. Each has their own job to do, yet each set has a definite effect on the efficiency and/or attitude of the others.

Thus if the sales people are bringing in more orders than the assemblers can fill or the packers can dispatch, the assemblers and packers are going to be worked off their feet. If this persists for too long one of the overworked employees is likely to get stressed out and go on a destructive binge, wrecking the company's equipment along the way.

Fluctuating bar charts at the side of the screen give constant updates as to the balance between supply and demand. An imbalance between the two usually leads to staff problems, either through staff being over or underworked. By clicking on an office on the floor plan the current status of the occupant is revealed. All employees of the same type react alike, so if one packer complains of being bored, all packers will be bored.

Who's the tea leaf?

When a problem is identified it can be tackled in one of several ways, such as adjusting prices, firing or hiring staff, adjusting advertising expenditure and so on. To assist in the decision making online help in the form of an accountant, an economist, a lawyer and a public relations consultant is available. These professionals will give advice in their respective fields and their advice should usually be acted upon. The tough part is translating their advice from jargon into action.

The accountant is a particularly annoying twerp. His advice on cash flow difficulties is valuable, but he also insists on revealing when embezzlement is taking place. What he does not do is reveal which employee is doing the embezzling, so the player has to click on up to 96 office spaces to catch the culprit with his or her larcenous fingers in the till.

This was such a tedious exercise I cheerfully ignored embezzlement. A 'find the thieving bastard and string him up' icon would have been better than this long winded method of locating thieves. A further problem with embezzlement is that anyone who later occupies the office of the embezzler also becomes an embezzler. So, over the course of a 90 year game the number of office spaces available for honest employees diminishes. I think this is a bug rather than a satirical comment.

Lab fest

The game has the feel of an experiment being performed under laboratory conditions. Occasional random events, such as factory fires, terrorist attacks or strikes provide some variety but are generally inconsequential to the successful company. I can't avoid the suspicion that this game was designed as a business training tool which some bright spark decided could be marketed as a game. It is not a game. It is a puzzle. It sits there on my Windows Games group alongside **Solitaire** and **Minesweeper**, and like those two games it is a pleasant way to pass the time; quite addictive yet not a game one would rush home to play. Recommended for inveterate tinkerers and business school students only.❑

Capitalist Pig

Designed by
David C Thomas

Published by
Pluma Software

Systems
Macintosh, PC

Notes
Colour or black & white displays available on Mac. PC version requires Windows 3x

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Reader Service No. 85

Up Pompei

How to avoid a farce and win in Caesar

By Marc Dultz

Playing **Caesar** is the equivalent of attending a modern day toga party. Chalices of intoxicating gameplay combined with a feast for the eyes and mind represent a sumptuous emperor's banquet. So take the sandals off, put the shield and sword down, and start peeling a grape. Better yet, have that store-bought pleb peel it instead.

I Came, I saw, I bought

Plebs, short for Plebians, or workers, are the key to successfully maintaining a cohesive empire. Fail to keep plenty on the payroll, and the emperor could be asking for more than tribute at the annual Coliseum Ball. Food for thought, food for the lions.

Remember to make a religious pilgrimage to the Tribune of the Plebs located in the Forum. I've found that intially one should at least spend 100 Denarii on plebs and continue to increase it by 5 Denarii per year.

In such a manner one usually a residual of approximately 10 plebs to do with as seen fit. As the city and provincial empire grows, these pleb recruits will be sorely needed to repair roads, keep fires at bay, and repoint the average villa. Failure to keep a constant supply of new plebs available may bring on economic suicide.

The game is unforgiving if each plebian is not given working papers. Be sure to maintain an excess for each work-related category of at least 25%. If 40 plebs are called for to wallpaper the huts then maintain a supply of 50. Keep in mind that additional building will take place during the year so the reserve plebs will be tapped to don work togas. A happy pleb is a working pleb.

Friends, Romans, er, barbarians...

The road to Rome is anything but paved with gold. Connecting one's capital to the farflung villages in a typical province can be an exasperating task. Neighboring barbarians are doing their very best to detour the locals and make the dot to dot travel map an exercise in futility. Fortunately, barabarians can serve a purpose.

As barbarians take their sometimes circuitous path to the capital they tend to clear some unpassable terrain that lies in their path. Allowing them to intially stay on the provincial map without engaging them in battle tends to prove more beneficial than harmful since they can help to clear paths to the other towns. What's more, the local cohort tends to be so weak at first that it doesn't pay to engage the marauding devils. However, the Prima Cohors (First Cohort) can be used to bait the barbarians and lure them to terrain they can subsequently clear free of charge.

Road building at the provincial level is costly since roving barbarians love to turn them into potholes. Roads should be constructed only when enough funds are available to connect the capital to a single nearby town in a single year. Beginning a road with hopes of finishing it in the following game year is folly. A barbarian can wipe out almost an entire length of road in a matter of minutes.

Also keep in mind that clearing land first is cheaper than just building on uncleared terrain. For instance, it costs 15 Denarii to clear a rocky section and an additional 30 Denarii to build a road on the cleared spot. Conversely, building that same stretch of causeway on uncleared property costs 60 Denarii. That's an additional 15 Denarii spent that could've gone elsewhere.

Save the building of the Imperial Highway until confident it can stand barbarian roadhogs for two game years. It's too costly to continually repair the highway and unless proper defenses have been erected then the money can be best spent erecting great walls or building forts.

Panel beaters

The advisory panel, found at the forum level, is the single most important guide to determining how to hande the governing of a province. Before beginning any form of construction consult with the Industrial Advisor. He will indicate what forms of industry are best suited to that particular province. If, for example, he recommends producing wheat, spices, and copper and one decides upon a career in pottery, tin, and ivory then the industrial output will never takeoff. Listen to their advice, but watch out for glistening knives!

Another important advisor to heed is the Treasurer. Although an optimum of zero unemployment and low taxes are desirable, it may become necessary to temporarily raise both for quick infusions of cold cash. He will indicate if a province is profitable or not, a key signal of potential longterm problems. Unrest may unfortunately result, but sometimes unrest can be beneficial. They can clear areas of low value and once the unrest is put down, neighboring structures may actually increase in value.

Twins: Identical or Fraternal?

Legend has it that Romulus and his twin brother, Remus, founded Rome upon the seven hills that make up the metropolis. Designing a provincial capital in Caesar involves some surveying of the local terrain too, albeit land bereft of any rolling hills. However, the planning of the city should adopt a 'twin' city type layout to maximize both the industrial as well as the general populace taxbase, important for raising funds for other work projects. To further this discussion, I've used 'Romulus' as the codeword for the general population's living quarters while 'Remus' shall signify the industrial sector.

To take advantage of land value and henceforth property values, plan on locating Romulus near the rivers and /or lakes. To see any hope of seeing level 16 housing it is important to understand the relationship between water access and property value. Houses need not be placed on every available square since some may never increase in value due to local overpopulation.

I like to place no more than a block of nine houses together (3 x 3), all on roadfront property with a fountain at one end and a temple at the other. Keep in mind that in order for the housing or temple to begin to upgrade they need living space to grow. A level 16 house takes up nine spaces (3 x 3), while the top level temple takes up 6 spaces (2 deep x 3 across). To view the various grades of housing, click on the house icon with the left mouse button, press and hold the right button then press the

A review of Caesar appears on page 22 of this issue.

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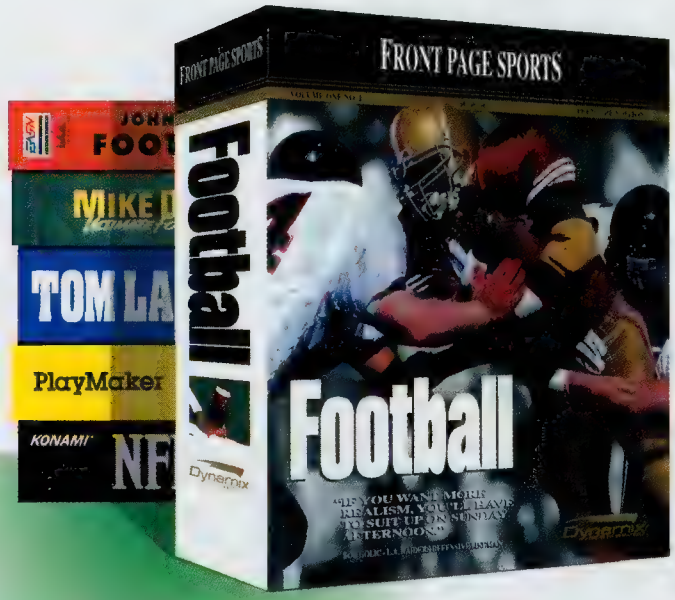

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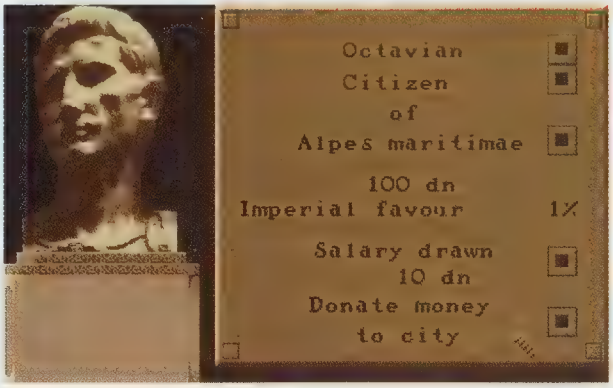


left button again. All of the variations are available for perusal so as to determine whether utopia is close.

Many times I try to have a forum available with various amenities. Keep in mind that water is one's lifeline to keeping Romulus prosperous. Keep it flowing via reservoirs and fountains or dig wells in the backyards. Remember, too, that sometimes pipes can be too long and are therefore unable to keep a fountain flowing. Experiment by shortening the pipe then building a new fountain. The administration map should be checked religiously for proper water distribution.

Sprinkling a handful of markets and prefectures around are also necessary to make sure the populace is well-fed and paying their fair share of taxes. Barracks should be kept at a distance preferably near where one plans on building walls around the city. Soldiers tend to reduce land value since no one wants to borrow sugar from a bunch of sweaty neighbors.

Rumor has it that houses begin to see upgrades in a city from left to right and then from top to bottom, although Impressions has neither confirmed nor denied this. If this is true, it makes sense to place Romulus at the top left hand corner of the map and Remus at the bottom right. Likewise, place initial amenities towards the upper left hand corner in order that the houses there appreciate in value quickest.

Remus is a different matter. This section of town should be far removed from 'the left side of the tracks' (?) in order that they not reduce Romulus' land value. Check with the Industrial Advisor to determine what form of workshop is most suitable for the environs.

Whereas the forum was the centerpiece for Romulus, a centrally located heavy industry serves the same pupose for Remus. Outline the industry with roads then surround it with at least a 3:1 ratio of workshops no more than 3 spaces from the industry. Next, surround the workshops with at least a 2:1 ratio of markets, no more than 3 spaces away, in order that the finished goods find their way to market.

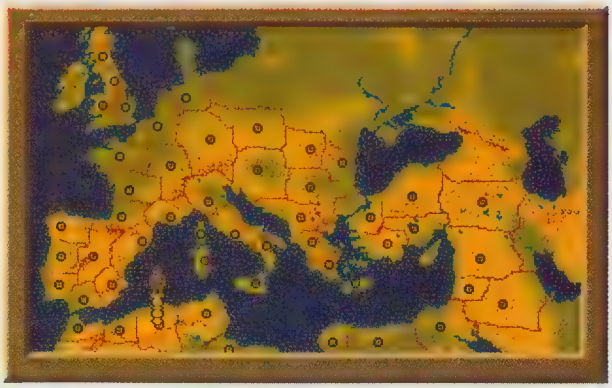
Protect Remus

Lastly, some low grade housing and wells should be placed no fewer than 3 spaces away from the workshops to insure a proper manpower pool is available. In no time one should see the workshops bristling with laden loading zones and smoking chimneys. Make sure to protect Remus with barracks and administrate with prefectures.Likewise take care to build plenty of roads to support the commercial traffic. Connect a well protected Remus to Romulus and voila, fraternal twin cities.

Waging war utilizing the simplistic combat model of Caesar can be a case of trial by error, if not trial by fire. Succinctly, combat with barbarians can be a trying experience.Try any tactic and they all tend to

intially fail. The key to victory over the barabarians lies in conscription and wages. I've found that at least a wage of 65 Denarii and a conscription rate of 35% to be a good mix to recruit battleworthy troops for Uncle Samulus.

A quality force entails morale of at least 5 (this can increase in battle) and the regular troops numbering 6 or more centuries. Tend to be conservative in battle by intially choosing standard frontal assaults followed up by charges when the enemy is at 2 or less. Don't be afraid to retreat from battle.



Prudence is the better part of valor

If the first round or two goes in the barbarians favor, chances are the battle is already lost. Although retreating reduces the unit's morale it does preserve much of their remaining troop strength. Prudence is the better part of valor. I've found that flanking movements or forming turtle does little to aid one's warring,cause. Stick with the basics.

Forts are best employed at road junctions between villages. In such a manner, they can patrol along lengths of road between villages increasing their chances of intercepting barbarians or at least localizing the latter's damage. It may become necessary to temporarily demobilize cohorts especially if their troop quality is suspect. If irregulars outnumber the regular troops then it's time to disperse them instead of watching them push up daisies after a pitched battle.

When designing a perimeter defense for the city don't forget to employ the lakes as natural boundaries against the barbarians. They serve the same purpose as walls and cost nothing to boot. Stretches of wall can be connected to the lakes thereby reducing the cost of defending the city.

When barbarians unavoidably do enter the city, be sure to inspect walls and repair them as quickly as possible. I like to keep about 50 Denarii in reserve for this express purpose. Further, clear rubble as quickly as it's created. Otherwise the rubble will lessen the value of the neighboring structures turning houses into hovels, and likewise reducing one's tax returns. No itemized deductions here.

The heart of **Caesar**, so to speak, beats to a different drummer. Water is life. If it doesn't trickle into the right sections of the city then unrest will. Always keep it flowing otherwise the natives will get awful restless in a hurry.

Finally, don't be afraid to borrow money from one's own coffers. The stuffed mattress comes in handy when the tax collectors fail to do their job.

With any luck and a little perserverance, the red carpet to Rome will be rolled out. Just make sure to hang a left at the coliseum and steer clear of the lions. Out to lunch takes on new meaning there.❑

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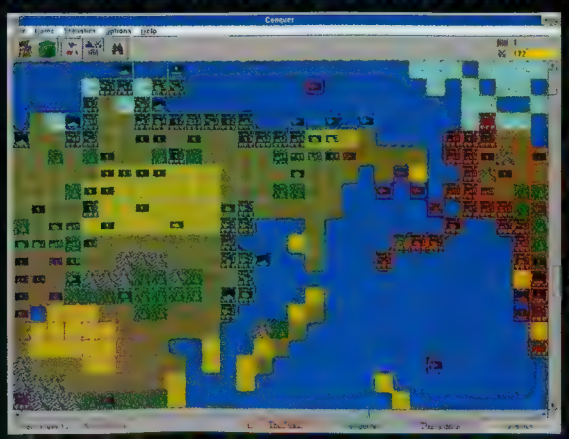

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Vikings

By John Harrington

The **Vikings** of the title is a bit of a misnomer as this is not a game of raiding, rape and pillage. The full title, **Kingdoms of England II, Vikings: Fields of Conquest**, is nearer the mark in describing the nature of the game. Set in the late 11th century, it is about the power struggle to become King of Britain (or 'England,' as some Americans insist on calling Britain) in competition with five other factions (human or computer controlled).

The map of the British Isles, plus bits of Scandinavia, is divided up into 199 regions. Each region is a source of military manpower, tax income and raw materials, such as food, wood or metals. It follows, therefore, that the more regions under a faction's control, the greater that faction's ability to raise more armies to annexe yet more regions.

At the beginning of the game well over half of the land is unaligned to any kingdom, but persuading a region to join a faction is a simple matter of hitting the peasants repeatedly over the head with a blunt instrument. Eventually, after about six hours play, the factions give what's left of the peasantry a break and start beating up each other's professional armies in an attempt to seize key territories, or to simply run the opposition off the island.

Vikings has the look and feel of something which was first designed as a board game and then converted to a computer. Certain similarities can be drawn with the board games **Britannia** and **Kingmaker**. **Vikings** lacks the historical flavour of those two games, but it offers more strategic nuances than the former and is certainly more decisive than the latter. It's nearest PC equivalent is Impressions' **Feudal Lords**, and although that is by no means a bad game, **Vikings** does more and does it considerably better.

An example of the extra level of detail available is the different military unit types which can be recruited. Whereas a game like **RISK** has a single universal military unit, Vikings boasts swordsmen, archers, crossbowmen, pikemen, knights (mounted and unmounted) and champions.

Battles are not tactical in the sense that units can be deployed on a map, but attention has to be paid to the composition of an army. Having an overwhelming advantage in terms of archers is of little use if only three swordsmen are protecting them; the archers will simply be overrun. Similarly, having a crack team of mounted knights is about as much use as a snow plough in the Houston Astrodome if the battle is being fought in dense woodland.

What's encouraging about the game system is that they encourage historically valid strategies. Frontiers should be heavily garrisoned while the heartlands get on with the business of producing food and taxes. Ideally, border regions should be bolstered by castles, which as well as being impregnable to all but siege attacks, offer 'home advantage' to friendly units fighting in adjacent regions.

Pitched battles with rivals should be avoided unless numerical superiority ensures the right result. Retreat is always an option for both sides, but as the great Joe Louis used to say, 'You can run but you can't hide.' Part of the pleasure of the game is bottling up an opponent, forcing him to invade someone else's territory to expand his empire.

Naval conflict is, quite rightly, absent from the game, but the option of jumping on a boat and raiding up the coast is possible. It's a neat way of bypassing the terrain effects on movement and a devastating ploy for getting behind enemy lines. I suppose that's why the coastlines of Britain are littered with the remnants of castles on cliff-tops.

As with any game, there are some minor drawbacks. **Vikings** is ostensibly multi-player but this option is a non-starter. For one thing, it's a sequential turn based game and each campaign takes a long time. The designers seem to have recognised this by allowing human players to come and go at any stage of the game.

I found that the end-game is a bit of a slog. There is the excitement of laying siege to an opponent's stronghold to liven things up, but generally it is a case of sending several large campaign armies on nationwide tours, hoping to trap a weaker opponent in the open. Perhaps the fact that I reached the end-game at about 7.00am after playing nine hours non-stop might have some bearing on my judgement. On increased difficulty levels, players can expect much longer games.

Some might also regret the lack of graphic interludes depicting battles or sieges, although I personally count this as a good thing, and indicative of the designer's intent to create a playable game rather than a breathtaking piece of software. If such was the designer's intent then he has succeeded in creating a **Viking** good game.❑

Published by
Realism Entertainment

Designed by
Brian Vodnik

Systems
Amiga, IBM PC

Systems Requirement
Amiga - 1mb;
PC -286/12

PC Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse, keyboard

Players
1-6

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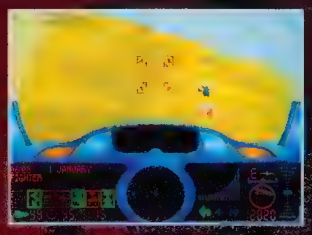

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Great Naval Battles! It's SSI America and Super Ships in the North Atlantic

John Van Valer goes cruising

America in the Atlantic and **Super Ships of the Atlantic** are SSI's two expansion disks for their popular **Great Naval Battles: North Atlantic (GNBNA)** simulation. With the soon to be released Scenario Editor, the **GNBNA** series will be complete and SSI will likely move to the Pacific Theater for further development of their WWII naval series. These expansion disks offer a number of new scenarios, campaign variations and ships to the original game. They also attempt to fix some of the major problems with **GNBNA** version 1.0.

Both **GNBNA** expansion disks require the original **GNBNA** game. **GNBNA** itself requires a 386SX or better PC, VGA graphics, a mouse, approximately 8.5 megabytes free hard disk space, 572K free RAM, and 724K of EMS. It will not be run under Microsoft Windows. A version that does not use expanded memory is included, but does not include all the features of the EMS version.

New start

The premise behind **Super Ships** is that WWII did not start in 1939, but as late as 1946. In the extended pre-war period, Germany and Britain concentrate on building ship designs never historically completed. The new German ships in **Super Ships** include the 'H' class battleship (larger and more powerful than the Bismarck class), the 'P' class pocket battleship, the 'M' class light cruiser, and the 1940 'Z' class destroyer.

Britain receives the Vanguard and Lion class battleships, the Bellona and Swiftsure class light cruisers, and the Battle class destroyer, which actually did serve for an extended period after WWII. There are no German carriers, however. All these ships are more modern and more capable than those originally included in **GNBNA**.

Ten new scenarios cover convoy attacks, battleship and fleet engagements, and raider breakouts. Three new campaign games cover hypothetical starting dates for the war, 1942 - 1946, 1944-1946, and just 1946. The later the starting date, the more powerful the initial forces for each side.

Credibility gap

Super Ships is no less interesting than **GNBNA**, but it suffers from a lack of believability. There is nothing wrong with hypothetical forces, **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** and **Aces of the Pacific** expansions posit reasonable alternate histories, but many of the ships in **Super Ships** were never more than designs on paper. Those that were actually started required tremendous amount of resources to build, unlike hypothetical aircraft, and, for the most part, were eventually scrapped. To even think that the Royal Navy would have stood still while the *Kriegsmarine* evolved into a nearly equal opponent, as it was in WWI, is also stretching things a bit. The new ships aren't counterbalanced by more modern aircraft and carriers that would have also appeared during the extended pre-war period. In any event, if SSI's extreme alternative history can be ignored, **GNBNA** fans will enjoy the newer, more powerful ships.

America in the Atlantic brings the US Navy into hypothetical conflict with the German Navy. It is assumed that Hitler did not recall his raiders to Germany after the US entered the war, and instead, chose to aggressively fight the American in the Atlantic Theater. Ten new scenarios cover Murmansk convoy action, fleet engagements, raider action, and other, smaller, engagements. The three campaigns cover the Prinz Eugen, Scharnhorst, and Gneisenau, raiding Allied shipping from February to April 1942, German raids into the Atlantic from 1942 to late 1943, and, purely hypothetical January 1942 American defense of Iceland against German and German controlled British ships.

The only new ships in '**America**' are North Carolina, South Dakota, and Iowa class battleships, the Wasp class carrier (of which there was only the Wasp), three heavy cruiser classes, two light cruiser classes, and two destroyer classes.

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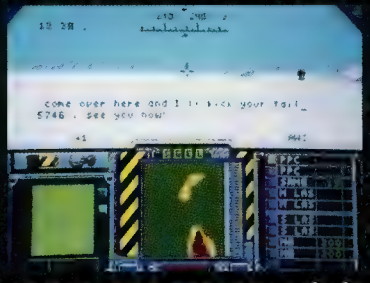

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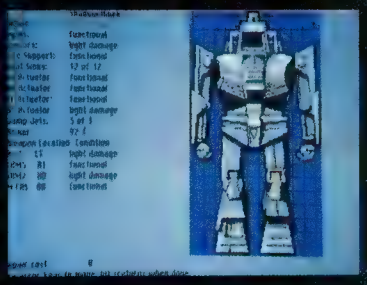

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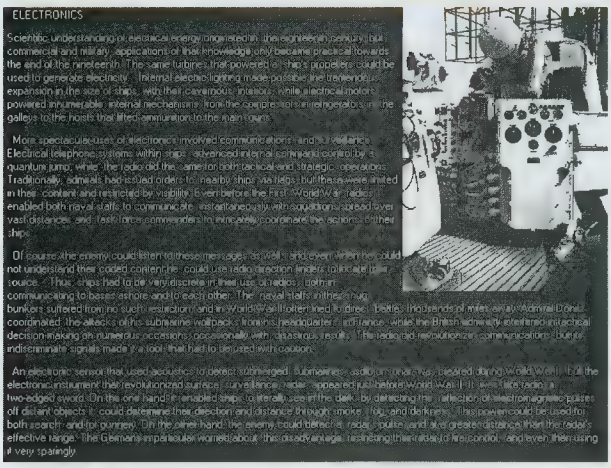
ELECTRONICS
Scientific understanding of electrical energy originated in the eighteenth century, but commercial and military applications of that knowledge only became practical towards the end of the nineteenth. The same turbines that powered ships' propellers could be used to generate electricity. Internal electric lighting made possible the tremendous expansion in the size of ships, with their cavernous interiors, while electrical motors powered innumerable internal mechanisms, from the complex of ventilators in the galleys to the hoists that lifted ammunition to the main guns.
More spectacular uses of electronics involved communications and surveillance. Electrical telephone systems within ships' advanced internal command control by a quantum jump, while the radio did the same on both tactical and strategic operations. Traditionally, admirals had issued orders to nearby ships via flags, but this was limited in their content and restricted by visibility. Even before the First World War, radio enabled both naval staffs to communicate instantaneously with squadrons spread over vast distances, and task force commanders to intimately coordinate the actions of their ships.
Of course, the enemy could listen to these messages, as well, and even when he could not understand their coded content, he could use radio direction finding to locate their source. Ships had to be very discrete in their use of radios, both in communicating to bases ashore and to each other. The naval staffs of the navy bunkers suffered from no such restriction, and in World War II often tried to direct battles, like hands of misery on an Admiral Doniz coordinated the attacks of his submarine wolfpacks from his headquarters in France, while the British admiralty interfered in tactical decision-making on numerous occasions, occasionally with disastrous results. The radio did revolutionize communications, but its indiscriminate signals made it a tool that had to be used with caution.
An electronic sensor that used acoustics to detect submerged submarines, radio or radar, cleared during World War II. Of all the electronic instrument that revolutionized surface surveillance, radar appeared just before World War II. It was like radar a two-edged sword. On the one hand it enabled ships to literally see in the dark, by detecting the reflection of electromagnetic pulses off distant objects it could determine their direction and distance through smoke, fog and darkness. This power could be used for both search and for gunnery. On the other hand, the enemy could detect a radar's pulse and at greater distance than the radar's effective range. The Germans in particular worried about this drawback, restricting their radar to navigation, and even then using it very sparingly.

It's nice that an American carrier was included, but it certainly makes one wonder why no German carrier was included in Super Ships, particularly when one considers that the Germans were much closer to completing a carrier (the Graf Zeppelin) than they were the other ships they are given in Super Ships.

SSI's official line is that German carriers were unrealistic. In truth, it's more likely that German carriers don't fit well into the existing **GNBNA** design and it was simply too much trouble to re-write parts of the program to make them a viable option. The **GNBNA** aficionado is left without the most interesting and most probable of the hypothetical German ships.

America and **Super Ships** also include updates to previous versions of **GNBNA**. Super Ships updates **GNBNA** to version 1.1, and **America** updates it to the final 1.2 version. Version 1.1 is not needed to update version 1.0 to 1.2. The updates may also be obtained, without the expansion disks, directly from SSI and various on-line services. Both fix numerous minor problems in both the scenarios and campaign games.

Major issues (discussed in issue 25 of this magazine) such as campaign game AI, the ship damage model, and AI targeting of enemy ships, would probably require significant changes to the underlying game design, so they are not significantly changed from version 1.0. This means that ships such as destroyers and light cruisers can still take tremendous (ie completely unrealistic) numbers of hits and damage from the 16´´ guns of a battleship before sinking.

Battle outcomes

This completely skews the outcomes of battles and usually makes enemy capital ships easy prey for a balanced task force. Although a number of minor interface issues were cleared up, many still remain or were overlooked during final production, such as American ships are found under the heading of British on the 'Ships' menu item. Clearly, the effort to address all the problems with the original game was only a partial one.

A similar problem exists with the documentation for each expansion. Each new ship class is described and detailed as are those in the original game. Yet, new armaments, such as the American and German 16´´ guns, are not detailed with a new penetration table. While the whole presentation of the penetration table is flawed, this data is still of some value to players. With all the production effort that has gone into **GNBNA**, it is surprising that such items were overlooked.

Building cost

The expansion disks are interesting, **America** more than **Super Ships**, but the dedicated naval gamer will find no real increase in gaming satisfaction with them. The forthcoming Scenario Editor will allow players to enjoy the full potential of the ships included in the expansions and original game, but the basic problems with **GNBNA** will remain. The player on a budget will also have to weigh heavily the cost of the expansions and editor against the problems to see if, in the end, they will really make the game more enjoyable.

Perhaps if SSI had gone with a detailed WWII expansion disk, instead of **America** and **Super Ships**, the original problems with the game system could have been overcome by focusing more on pure naval action. In this way, a number of problems that plague the design due to the technology of its historical time period, such as naval aircraft, carriers, and powerful small ships, could have been removed and the overall simulation simplified to more accurately model the subject.

Ken Humphries and his **GNBNA** team at SSI should be given credit for their work in at least attempting to fix and support their product since its initial release. Post-initial release support has not been a strong point for SSI historically, but it is clear that extra effort has been made to make **GNBNA** better. Perhaps with continuation of their naval simulator series in the Pacific Theater, the lessons of this program can be best applied.❑

MAMA SEZ . . . Games are good for you

Lookout gang...MaMa's back at the keyboard and ready to have a say or two! After a vascular disaster I spent a month in a real hospital and another month in a semi-hospital and a few more months learning how to write without smoking and pace without walking. The former was easy enough with the help of chewing gum, and the latter has developed into a stylish step-clank-step-clank-twirl-repeat aided by my trusty loft strands (that's forearm crutches to 'non-challenged'). I was getting nearly as good at the crutch pace as I am at the Beholder Two-Step when the miracles of physical therapy and exercise worked wonders and released me and my feets for further writing feats.

You play the instrument. (Use 0-9 to play, or
ESC to return to game)
You put the instrument away.
You see a hostile yeti.
You get no response.
Underworld: incongruous conversations

During the stint in the sick-house, I had some work that needed doing so we arranged to have a computer installed at my bedside. Fortunately, Word Perfect takes up just a teeny tiny fraction of the hard drive and even more fortunately, the hospital had regular phones which allowed me to hook up a modem too. This combination of fortunes made me the absolute queen of the rehab unit.

During occupational therapy, the other women were learning how to get around in the kitchen, I learned how to set up an ergonomically correct computer station. With a soundblaster and headphones. What a racket! Guys hung out just to see my hardware, and the ranks of new gamers swelled with every game they saw. Even my radiologist fell captive to my screen allure when he found a game of **Conquest** more interesting than my arteriogram.

In between jabs I downloaded some of my favorite shareware games: **Conquest**, **Commander Keen**, **Cosmo**, **Rogue**, **Mahjongg**, **Jumpman**, **CosmoServe**, and a few others. As I played each of these, different members of the staff and several of the patients suddenly started thinking seriously about getting that computer they had been afraid to buy. Two of the nurses decided to upgrade to VGA and one of the doctors sat himself down and told me all about his new database. Talk in the lounge turned from everybody's ailments to MaMa's new game or MaMa's name or some of the wild messages collected from the modem connection.

There was some real excitement when my 89 year old room mate reached level two in **Cosmo**. Of course, that was nothing compared to the depression I fell into when an 84 year old woman beat me at table hockey, but that's another game.

Rodent manipulation could have been a problem but wasn't. The nurses could only find a tiny bedside table for the computer and I couldn't sit up to play games. We found that metal clipboard/chart covers make an ideal portable mouse pad. Great hospital tradition - improvise, improvise, improvise.

After moving to the semi-hospital, I parted with some dough I had been saving and invested in a 486/50 system which was delivered to my new bedside. What a get well incentive that was! Every one of my pals brought me a game or two and suddenly I was back in business - and with an audience. The other patients just loved gathering in my room after dinner and watching me dash around the **Underworld** or roam the wilds of New Guardia. This sometimes lead to incongruous conversations.

I was showing someone one of the **Underworld** map levels and pointing out the stairs I had just used and the altar I was trying to reach. I went into a long winded explanation of the route and the dangers and the increase in skills I would get when I reached the altar. The question was - 'and then do you win?' - how

Veil of Darkness: vamped!

could I tell her that I was only on level one of the game.

When I finally got back into the real world and could escape to our game world on a regular basis, I found a renewed interest in everything. Games that I wouldn't look at twice now get my undivided attention. Why? Because I saw all of our games in a whole new light when I had an audience. I saw all of the fun reflected and amplified by the light of discovery in the other folks eyes. Most of them had only seen video games and none had ever seen a grown-up play with such gusto as I exhibited. Frequently I heard gasps behind me as I battled goblins or lobbed fireballs at the enemy. And shouts of victory when the battle was won.

Games and gamers turned what could have been a nightmare a bearable experience. Hopefully the designers and publishers of all these grand games of ours will continue to provide grist for my emotions and fun for all of our audiences.

The game of the name

I have three characters that I run in just about every RPG. Spinner, my male alter ego is, by virtue of his mama, rather the androgynous sort - a teller of tales, weaver of plots and caster of spells. MaMa the character is cool, gorgeous, and drop grand at everything she tries, especially prestidigitation. Matilda is the warrior of the crew, a fiery amazon of no cool whatsoever, perfect for heavy breathing or hack 'n bash dungeon crawling.

Depending upon the design of a game, these three show up as anything from just a name to a personally developed entity with real character. MaMa sez...the game name game is much more important than we realize.

Armed with my usual trio of choices, I raised the **Veil of Darkness** and entered the latest world of SSI's Event Horizon design team. I named the game character Spinner and crashed right in. After a few moderately successful hours meandering about the village, chatting with the locals and fetching a few items, I began to get some very peculiar feelings. I kept wanting to hitch up my jeans and spit.

It took a while for me to realize what was bugging me. At first I thought I was bored. Then I concluded that the manual was much better than the game, so good that it ruined the storyline for me. I felt sorry for the vampire! Now...how could I go after anything with such a romantic and tortured past?

I am sure this is not the reaction expected by the programmers and designers. I hardly expected it of myself. But there it was. I was playing a character and my heart wasn't in it. Such a shame, too. The game is superb in every way that really counts, including the characterizations and story.

The **Veil of Darkness** interface is the same as that used in **The Summoning** and **Dusk of the Gods**, both of which had great appeal for me. Then it dawned on me...**Veil** is *too* good, *too* real. This Spinner character was no mere boy toy, he was jutjawed manly and a very uncomfortable play for mama. Especially at the endgame where he gets the girl. Big fat hairy deal.

Am I having an identity crisis or has sexism crept into the crypt to spoil my fun? Neither. I have had an epiphany...a realization of just why I so enjoy multiple character party games and have a rough time getting into many single character roleplays and graphic adventures. This is a tough one to explain, but perhaps I can illustrate.

I am currently enjoying **Ringworld** from Tsunami. I am not playing a game, I am watching the characters move through the story, adding a mouse click or two every now and then. Not very challenging, but a lot of fun since I am quite a fan of the works of Larry Niven and this game is faithful to the source material.

One of the scenes involves Quinn, the male lead character, getting more than a little lucky with a local chief's daughter. Miranda, the female crew member, only gets semi-lucky with the chief himself.

As the scene progressed I became really miffed that Quinn got lucky while I just watched. Immediately thereafter, I laughed at myself when Miranda's predicament became apparent. If Spinner lucked out in **Veil**, I would have felt awkward, embarrassed even. Silly, but the logical result of the *you do* point of view in gaming.

Multiple character party games allow a less personal involvement in the game happenings. I can hack and bash with abandon as Spinner and MaMa and Matilda and pals, and concentrate on strategy or puzzles. Single character roleplays that allow either male or female leads are equally comfortable for me and my crew.

The **Ultima Underworld** games are perfect examples of asexual design. Either male or female, characters grow and win because of game developed skills and attributes, not because of a chosen or assigned sex.

When composing a party for one of D W Bradley's epic **Wizardry** games, I am always careful to include a he-man in the crew, if only to imagine his joy at the voluptuous denizens of the gameworld. I also include two she-girls so they can gossip about the he-man's escapades. Frequently I get to laugh out loud at the conversations I imagine.

I suppose all this boils down to the fact that game players are sometimes sexist pigs. The more real and involving a game is, the more likely it will lose it's appeal for a segment of the gaming population. This is a terrific development. MaMa sez...go ahead, make us blush, or get a rush...just get real. We have all been shouting for a true role playing experience for years.❑

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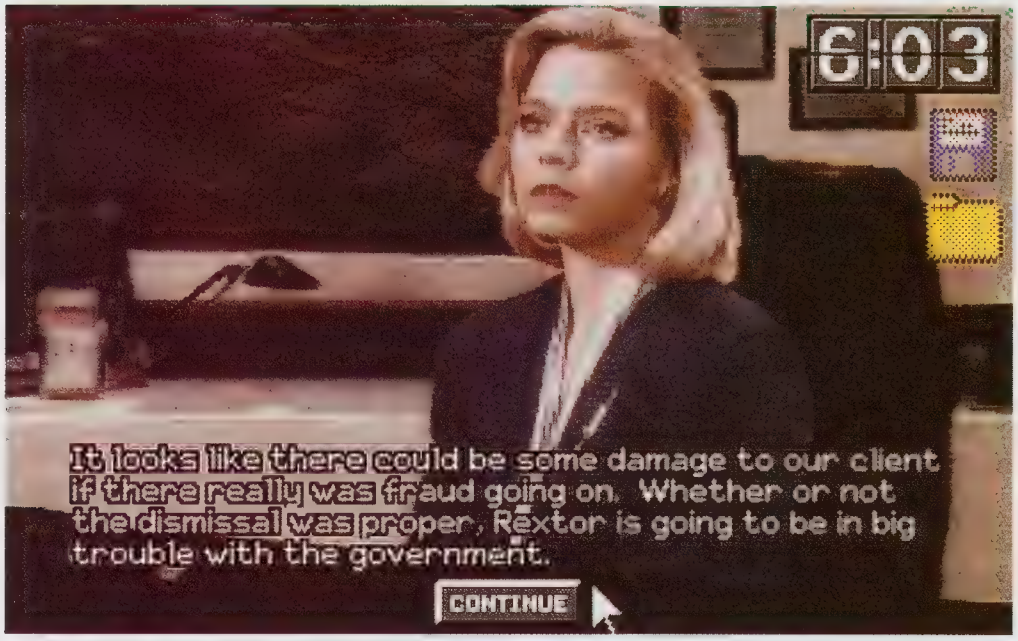
LA LAW

By Richard Lawrence


6:03
It looks like there could be some damage to our client if there really was fraud going on. Whether or not the dismissal was proper, Rextor is going to be in big trouble with the government.
CONTINUE

Certain software products evoke a sense of awe in the player. They may make one wonder and marvel at the complexity of play, or at the audio visual contents. A properly designed role-playing game may even have one speculate what it would really be like to play the hero as portrayed in a software story. Action games can create speculation as to what new and exciting challenge will present itself on the next level. And then there are some games make one wonder why anyone thought such a product should be released. Such a game is **LA LAW** from Capstone.

Flaw and order

The player assumes the role of either Victor Sifuentes, Abby Perkins, or Jonathan Rollins, all characters from the hit TV show of the same name. The game follows the players progress through increasingly difficult legal cases on the way to becoming a Senior Partner in the prestigious law firm of McKenzie Brackman. The common working point is a picture of an office, with several areas on the screen activating different aspects of the game. Clicking on a folder brings up the current case file, containing case background, any relevant legal documents obtained so far, and personal notes (automatically created by the computer). Clicking on the phone allows the player to call various individuals pertinent to the case and question them. A small disk icon allows game functions like save and restore game, or exit to DOS. Finally, clicking on the door will lead to a view of the McKenzie Brackman offices.

The overall effect is very similar to many other 'logic tree' puzzle games, for instance ICOM's **Sherlock Holmes** series for CD ROM, or **Martian Memorandum** from Access. The objective is to deduce from building evidence the correct (true) events of the case, and to use that in the courtroom to achieve justice. The principle tool used to collect this evidence is the telephone. When calling someone about the case at hand, typically about four choices in questions appear for the player to initially choose from. Some choices will lead to more possibilities to ask about, some will prompt the player to meet the party involved, and some wrong questions may cut off the opportunity to ask further. A further complication is that there is a limited amount of time to gather information, and that every event in the game shaves more time off the clock.

Forced evidence

The problem with this system as used in the game is that it is very constrictive, leaving the player with the impression that there is little control over the events of the game. There is typically only one logic path to having the correct information to win the case, but several equally plausible solutions may be hinted at. This flaw becomes painfully apparent at the time of the trial, where the player seems to have practically no control over events. If the needed evidence is not present before the trial begins, it is highly unlikely that the case can be solved, because the game simply will not allow the player to call surprise witnesses or cross-examine at will. This reduces actual play to lucky guessing at key points or the brute force approach of saving at each juncture and attempting all possibilities.

Play is not enhanced by the graphics or sound. Here is a free technical hint to game designers using digitized television graphics in their game: invest in a simple video device called a time base corrector which will eliminate much of the jitter present throughout this game. A follow-up hint might be that VHS is not well suited as a source format - can't software houses afford SVHS these days? The reader can correctly infer from these comments that the graphics are of low quality throughout, and sound is commensurate.

The cases themselves are often fairly interesting, but even when the player gets a clear vision of the truth in a case, the arbitrary nature of the game can make it difficult to solve - for instance, a particular key witness may not present the correct question to ask in the trial phase, since the 'solution' to the case requires questions from a different witness.

This game might be a good idea on CD ROM, with lengthy animated sequences and professional actors giving the player a solid feeling of 'being there.' It definitely needs some type of help, since it's only current appeal would seem to be to die-hard fans of the television show.❑

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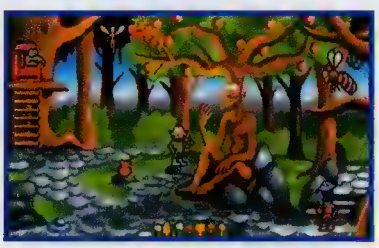

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Tornado: the integrated sim

The Ace's Guide to Red Baron
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Note
All screen shots accompanying this article are from **Tornado**, to be published shortly by Spectrum HoloByte (US) and Digital Intergration (UK).

Hey hey nonny-oh, almost springtime or so they say (as I write it's still snowing, perhaps the ozone layer's already well beyond repair, good luck to life on earth). Nice time of year to bring the hardware in for adjustment, repair and insurance review; just make sure the guys in the hangar put all the bolts back in the right place when they're done.

Aces aced?

Not much happening on the software front for now; Dynamix' sequel to the sequel, **Aces Over Europe**, is hopefully out by the time you're reading this. I'll take a bet back here in March and predict that 1) It'll be incredibly slow unless without a local bus motherboard, and maybe even then; 2) It'll sure look like everything Dynamix has already done in flight simulation, from **A-10** forward; and 3) It'll have even more compatibility problems than the previous two generations of this design. Number 1 will probably be taken care of sometime over the summer. Sure hope I'm proven resoundingly wrong; I like Dynamix' stuff but they've about tweaked all they can out of an increasingly dated looking design in **Aces of the Pacific**, and I'm sorry to see from the preview in this magazine that **Aces Over Europe** looks to be more of the same.

We'll have in-depth coverage of Spectrum HoloByte's **Tornado** as soon as we can come to grips with it; now *here's* going to be a 'realistic' sim, as is evident from the pervasive demo: endless engine and wing configuration controls, a smooth flight model with detailed joystick control performance, front-seat/back-seat stations, and lots of detailed ground objects. Digital Integration's **F-16 Combat Pilot** was an extremely realistic - and therefore extremely tough - sim to fly, fortunately this one looks toned-down a bit; let's just hope there's some game to the design as well.

Have some fun

Call me whatever you like, but after years of looking at these things and reading about flight performance and air combat, my goal in engaging a new piece of flight sim software is still primarily to have some fun. Either reading about the technical details of flight or actually going flying with a friend beats relying on even the best piece of sim software by a long shot, if learning about flight is what you're after.

The concerns when *playing a game* like **Falcon 3.0** or **X-Wing** or **Aces of the Pacific** are, to be frank, much more like the concerns present when playing an arcade game, role-playing game, or strategy game than they are like the those present when trying to make an actual IFR landing, let's not fool ourselves about that.

Pace and complexity

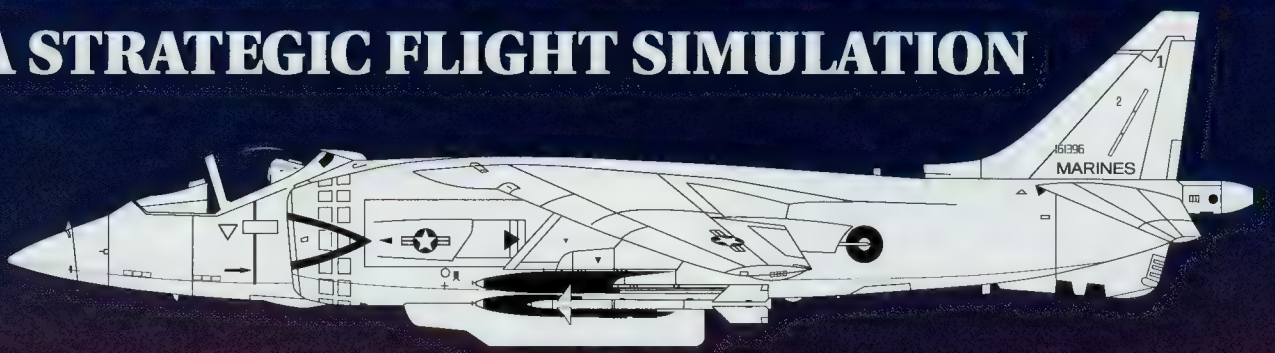
Flight sim excitement comes from a carefully balanced design, that pays attention to the pace and complexity of play more than anything else. Designers who forget this fact in favor of some zealous ideal of 'realism' (which even at its best is still a very primitive illusion in PC-based simulation software) aren't likely to have much of an audience. Throw in a taste of the systems management or flight performance details that provide the whiff of realistic performance we all enjoy, certainly, but not at the expense of what really counts with these things.

Speaking of having fun, Shay Addams, I'm delighted to report, after taking a sabbatical from his role as adven-

Owners of Windows Accelerator Card: AV-8B SUPER VGA available soon! Contact Domark.

AV8B HARRIER ASSAULT

A STRATEGIC FLIGHT SIMULATION



AV-8B HARRIER ASSAULT is no ordinary flight simulator. Not only do you pilot one of the world's most exciting fighters, you also command an entire naval task force comprised of amphibious assault ships, warships, helicopters, troops – and a squadron of AV-8Bs.

Strategic, operational and tactical scenarios challenge your command prowess while the flight simulation tests your dogfighting skills *to the max!*

"AV-8B Harrier Assault receives extremely high marks for graphics which are the best I've ever seen – BETTER THAN FALCON. The explosions and ground detail are really great... the artificial intelligence built into the game is incredible. It's an excellent game!"

– PC SOURCES MAGAZINE

"Harrier is an excellent flight simulator... state of the art!"

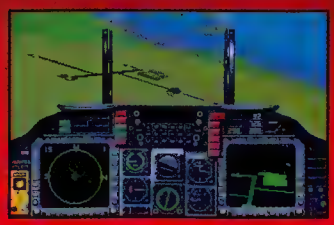
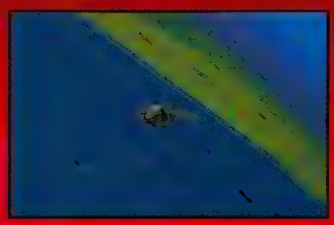
– AIR COMBAT MAGAZINE

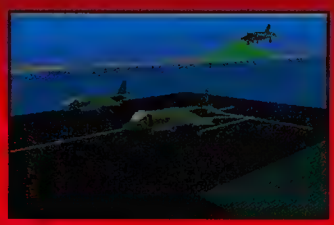
"It's a fabulous effort at designing a Harrier Simulation. It stands out from the pack of flight simulators already on the market. AV-8B provides spectacular flight modelling and campaigns."

– STRATEGY PLUS MAGAZINE

"In the battle of the Harriers, Domark's AV-8B scores an 89% (the highest ever for a flight simulator) while MicroProse's Jump Jet gets only a 75%."

– PC FORMAT MAGAZINE



Screens shown: IBM 256-color VGA displays.

IBM PC/COMPATIBLES & AMIGA

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Programmed by Simis Ltd Graphics by the Kremlin
Sound by Martin Walker Produced by Jim Tripp
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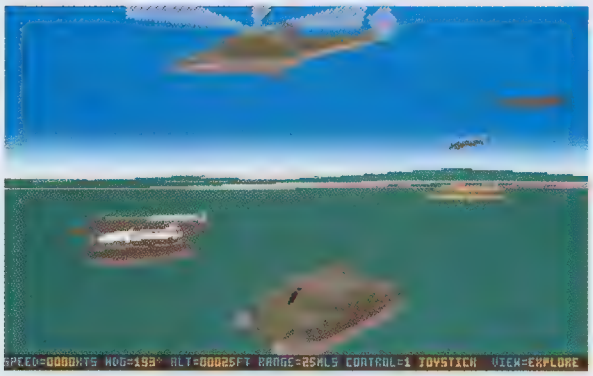
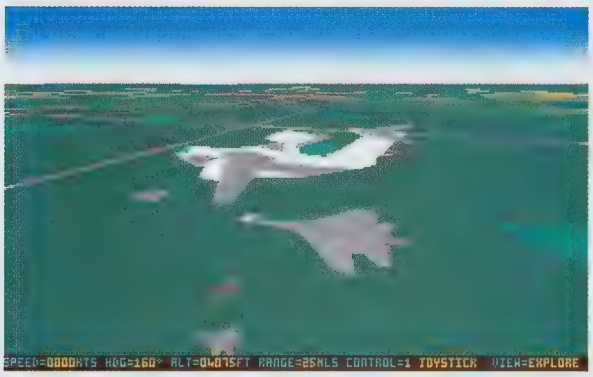
AV-8B Harrier Assault : 1992 Domark Group Ltd
Published by Domark Software Ltd

Reader Service No. 11





ture/role-playing expert extraordinaire, has returned to the fray with a silk scarf and goggles on. He's developing a series of small, highly affordable ($5.99 plus tax) help manuals for all the major flight sims out, from **Red Baron** to **X-Wing**. The man is taking literally thousands of hours to gather information and experience with each sim, and is then stripping it all down to the basics of what the player most needs to know to succeed. No attempts to rewrite history, re-design software or recompile executables here; just solid game-play information, presented in Shay's inimitable and highly readable style. The first example of all this can be seen in *The Aces Guide to Red Baron*. For more information write to Shay at the address listed in the sidebar accompanying this column.

Thrusting

Thrustmaster should be selling its **Weapons Control System Mark II** by now; this is the software re-programmable version of the original **WCS**, that will do away with the need to update ROMs every time a new sim game comes out. Despite having both **FCS** and **WCS** available for use, by the way, I have to admit that personally I still prefer the old **CH Flightstick** and **CH Mach III** combo for plain flying fun (heresy! I know). Why? Well, first off, the Thrustmaster stuff is ('realistically,' I'm told) simply not quite as precise around the centerpoint as the **Flightstick**. The resistance in the **FCS** makes it much more difficult to handle planes precisely, once used to the sprung-action of the **CH** gizmo.

Finally, perhaps most importantly, the **FCS** and **WCS** can't be balanced as comfortably on knees as the **CH** combo; it really requires strapping Thrustmaster's units to the arms of a chair to get them to strut their stuff. And it requires patience with having extra wires rerouting the keyboard to the **WCS**. Since my keyboard is literally my life, I'm quite leery of putting any games equipment between it and my computer, no matter how reputable. Superstitious, maybe, but such superstitions have kept my computer safe for years from mysterious mayhem.

Herculean

On the graphics front, I've been experimenting recently with VESA-driven graphics accelerator cards; herewith a quick report. Most importantly, Domark's **AV8B** Harrier simulation will break new ground with its upcoming SVGA add-on driver support. What the SVGA graphics mode does most significantly is provide a wide-open sky, making for situational awareness that dwarfs that based in standard VGA sims. After flying **AV8B** in SVGA mode, everything else seems like looking through a telescope by comparison, and that's no exaggeration.

Stealth is good

The card used to test out **AV8B** was Diamond's old Stealth VRAM accelerator card, based on S3's 86C924 graphics co-processor chip. This design is doggedly slow in standard VGA mode, and only a slight improvement in Windows (the main touted function for these graphics accelerator cards). I'm told the more recent 86C801 from S3's alot faster in both DOS and SVGA/Windows mode, but there've been numerous reports of bizarre configuration problems even with cards based on this chip (S3's earlier chips did all sorts of neat things like change the palette available in Windows to a sickly and sombre set of hues, leave mouse-droppings on-screen with any movement of the pointer, and so on).

I've been the extremely pleased owner of a different graphics accelerator card recently, the **Hercules Graphite 210.** Not only is this thing blazing fast (comparable in some tests with even Diamond's recent Viper card, which costs at least twice as much), but it's been a dream in terms of compatibility with other hardware and software. The **Graphite** installed once and has been zipping along without a single gotcha ever since. It's based on the IIT AGX014 chip, something originally designed for XGA modes, and supports the VESA standards as well as Windows and VGA with stunning results.

S3 seem to have cornered the market for the nonce in terms of sheer marketing clout, and as usual advertising fanfare will no doubt win out over actual quality, but anyone looking for a fast 24-bit card would be well-advised to take a gander at the new **Hercules** line, most definitely.

X-citement

Wrapping up, let me just join in on the recent enthusiasm for **X-Wing**; to anyone who has played **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** (**SWOTL**) there will be a few familiar elements here, but boy oh boy have they been smoothed into something really cohesive! **X-Wing** is a fabulous game, and a reminder that gaming is ultimately what flight sim stuff is all about.

The joy of playing **X-Wing** has, oddly enough, sent me back yet again to **SWOTL**, to compare flight tactics between the two designs. This will sound like another heresy, but I'll dare say that **X-Wing** serves as a wonderful trainer for those who might've found certain aspects of **SWOTL** difficult or unmanageable. The techniques for dogfighting are, for instance, transferable between the designs (even though **SWOTL**, of course, replicates airplane performance and **X-Wing** does an excellent job of representing exciting space combat).

Call the broker! We need another four thousand bucks to replace the blades on the Cessna's prop again to pass inspection! Hmmm, maybe it's time to take up hang gliding? Crunch on call, over and under; see you next month.❑

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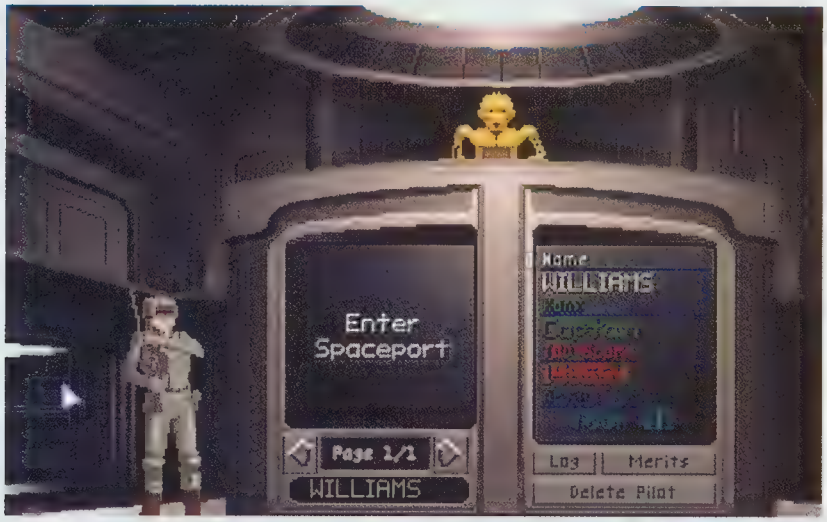
Reader Service No. 26

X-Wing

By Lee Johnson



Designed by
Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham

Published by
LucasArts

System Requirements
386/16 minimum, 571,000 bytes main RAM minimum; extra main RAM and 896K expanded memory recommended for additional features

Graphics
256 colour VGA, MCGA

Sound
Sound Blaster, AdLib, Roland, ProAudio Spectrum. General MIDI supported. PC internal speaker *not* supported.

Supports
Joystick, mouse, keyboard

Pilots, to your spacecraft! LucasArts' **X-Wing** space combat simulator is here! In **X-Wing**, the player assumes the role of a starfighter pilot, assisting the Rebel Alliance in its struggle against the evil Empire. Pilots will fly three different Rebel fighters: The A-Wing, an extremely fast and maneouverable interceptor whose dual lasers and twelve guided missiles pack a potent sting; The Y-Wing fighter bomber, relatively slow but well-armed and shielded; and of course, the X-Wing starfighter, a versatile ship whose agility and four wing-mounted laser cannons make it a power to be reckoned with.

Prove it

Which fighter the player is assigned to will depend upon the nature of the mission to be flown. **X-Wing** sports a good mixture of missions, so one is never stuck with a particular class of starfighter for very long. Each starfighter has a distinctive cockpit layout, but a similar set of controls, so moving from one type of ship to another is a painless process.

The game is divided into three major components: Proving Ground, Historical Missions, and Tours of Duty. In the proving ground, the player flies a fighter through a sort of 3-D slalom course in space, threading through gates and shooting laser turrets in a race against the clock. Completion of one difficulty level earns a pilot the right to move on to the next maze, usually with a shorter time limit and more obstacles.

No fear of failure

The historical missions give a pilot the opportunity to sharpen his skills in practice combat situations. Since pilots are cannot be killed or captured, players may practice tactics without fear of failure. It is recommended that new pilots complete at least a few of the historical missions before proceeding on to the three Tours of Duty. The Tours pit the player's skill against the might of the Empire in a life-or-death series of missions, eventually leading to a fateful confrontation with the Death Star itself. Once a mission has been successfully completed, it is added to the list of historical missions, where it may be replayed without affecting the pilot's Tour of Duty score.

X-Wing departs from previous LucasArts flight simulators in its use of 3-D polygon graphics instead of bitmaps to represent spacecraft in flight. The level of graphics detail in **X-Wing** can be adjusted upwards and downwards, so that the program remains relatively smooth even on slower machines. While lacking some of the fine detail of bitmaps, **X-Wing**'s polygons more than compensate by depicting motion with a fluidity which canned bitmapped images would be hard pressed to match. This produces certain benefits; for example, leading an enemy fighter with the laser cannons becomes much easier because the fighter's direction of motion is plainly visible. Pilots may fly close to capital ships without hitting the invisible sphere which seemed to surround the large ships in **Wing Commander**.

Bitmapped graphics are far from absent, however: **X-Wing** puts them to good use in the depiction of explosions, background stars, and sparking debris effects as TIE fighters disintegrate. In addition, animated bitmapped transition

scenes link the different parts of the game, and appear as occasional interludes between Tour missions.

X-Wing uses LucasArts' iMUSE music system, which not only provides music during the cut scenes and in selection screens, but sets the mood with background music during missions. In this respect, **X-Wing** is similar to Origin's **Wing Commander** games. With the appropriate sound card and sufficient memory, **X-Wing** uses a number of digitized sound effects, such as the roar of a passing TIE fighter, or the characteristic squirting noise of the X-Wing's laser cannons. It is worth noting that without one of the supported sound cards, the game produces *no* sound at all: The PC internal speaker is not supported by **X-Wing.**

Power surge

Although **X-Wing** the mouse and keyboard to be used as flight controls, it is extremely awkward to do so. A joystick is *highly* recommended. Moving a fighter to the left or right imparts a slight roll as the ship moves, but this is generally unimportant in space, where there is no up or down. Keyboard commands give access to the throttle, targeting system, power systems, weapon controls, and communications.

Power management plays an important role in **X-Wing**. Power from the ship's reactor can be routed to the ship's lasers and deflector shields; whatever remains is sent to the engines, affecting the fighter's maximum velocity. The lasers and shields require a certain power allotment to maintain a steady charge. Increasing power allocation past this break-even point causes these systems to recharge, while diverting power to the engines causes them to slowly discharge. Although starfighters do not have afterburners, a similar effect can be obtained by routing all available power to the engines and throwing the throttle wide open.

Players may also transfer energy between the laser and shield batteries. During intense dogfights, it is often helpful to allocate all available power to the lasers and shields, periodically tapping the apostrophe key (') to shore up the shields with laser energy. Use periods of inactivity to recharge the laser and shield batteries, in anticipation of action.

An additional control allows the shields to be configured to favour the forward part of the ship, the aft part, or spread evenly around the starfighter. Concentrating shield energy in one place can prolong the effectiveness of weak shields, provided that attacks are coming from one direction. Quickly pressing the 'S' key three times will smooth out the shields after a laser or missile hit.

To be forewarned...

X-Wing is considerably more challenging than other games of this genre - almost too challenging at times. Enemy spacecraft are wily and aggressive, twisting away from laser fire and then answering with blasts of their own. Capital ships, such as frigates and Star Destroyers, open up with a deadly hail of laser bolts as soon as an enemy pulls within range, making these ships nearly impossible to destroy. Imperial TIE interceptors and bombers pursue their goals with single-minded determination, requiring the player to be quick and alert.

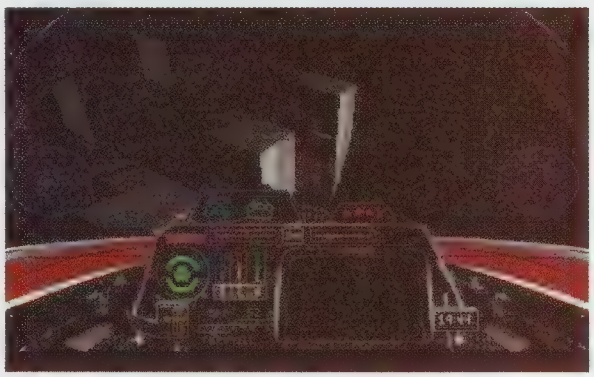
X-Wing's most glaring flaw is its requirement that 100% of a mission's objectives be satisfied before a player is allowed to advance to the next mission in a Tour of Duty. If the player fails to complete even one of the objectives, no matter how slight, the mission must be repeated. A consequence of this often frustrating feature is that losing missions do not affect the outcome of a campaign, as they do in the **Wing Commander** games: **X-Wing**'s plot is totally linear. While this is unfortunate, there are ways to make it work to one's advantage: the mission replay camera can be used to analyse a mission and find out what went wrong. Though it is unrealistic, some missions practically *require* fore-knowledge of events in order to be completed successfully.

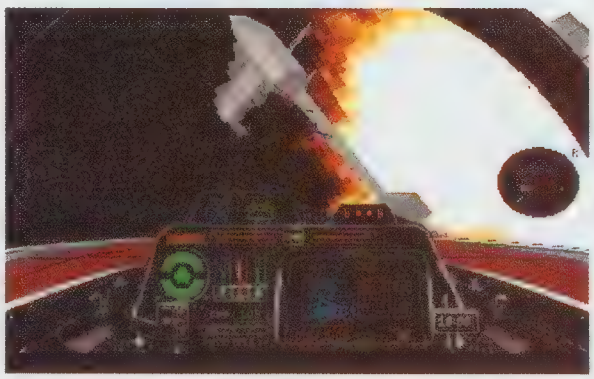
As soon as a mission objective is failed (for example, when a ship which must be guarded is destroyed), there is little point in continuing on with a mission. Hit the 'H' key to abort the mission and try again. Waiting around only increases the chance of losing a ship. By living to fight another day, the pilot keeps any points earned during the mission up to that point.

Tour de force

With their usual attention to detail, LucasArts successfully captures much of the flavour of space combat in the **Star Wars** universe. **X-Wing** is a solid product, easy to get started with, fun to play, and difficult to put aside. More of a flight simulation than an arcade shoot-'em-up, **X-Wing** rewards tactical thinking and planning nearly as much as it rewards fast reflexes.

Joystick jockeys who have grown jaded with games like **Wing Commander** will find **X-Wing** a welcome challenge. It is hoped that LucasArts will address the inflexibility of the Tours in follow-on products; regardless, the entertainment value of the game far outweighs the occasional frustrating missions one will face. Good luck, and may the Force be with you! ❑





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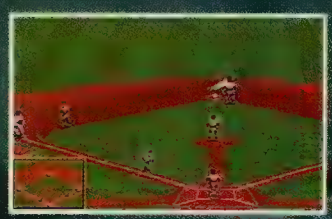

All Screens shown are IBM 256-color VGA.

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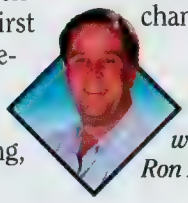

Emmy Award-winning announcer Ron Barr calls the action!

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THE SEASON BEGINS NOW.

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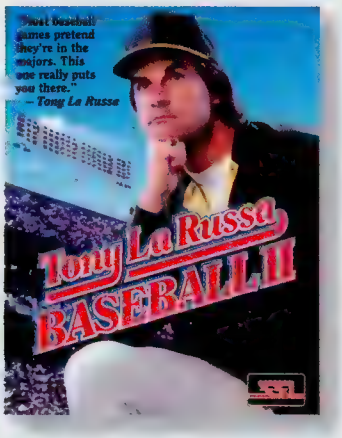

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The Sports Locker

World Tour Tennis

Designed by
Stan Chow, Jan Tian

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
IBM PC

System Requirements
286/12 or higher, 2.5 meg hard disk space

Graphics
VGA

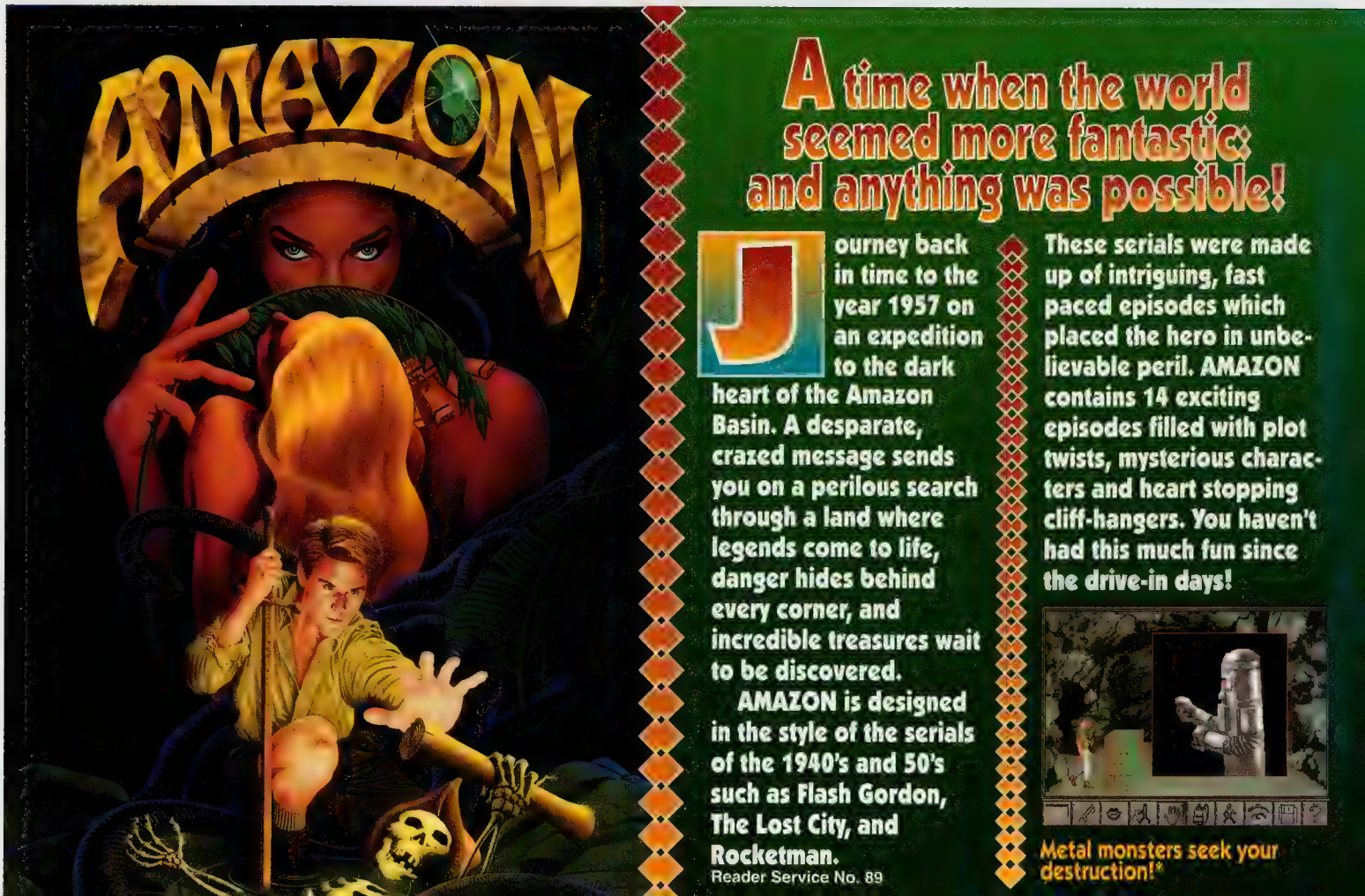
Supports
All major sound cards, mouse, joystick

Joseph McCullough visits the 2nd division

It's time for some major spring cleaning, and believe me, after a long winter filled with dozens of new sports games, things got pretty crowded in the ol' locker. Just this month I was clearing some space when I stumbled across two unassuming sports simulations crowded to the back behind mountains of press releases from Accolade and SSI. These aren't full-blown mega-games with every imaginable feature thrown in for good (or bad) measure. Instead, they are an obvious appeal to a different sector of the gaming public; one that doesn't have 30 meg of disk space to spare, or a 486 with 8 meg of RAM. It's nice to know that these games are still being made.

Wilson ProStaff Golf by Konami is a direct reaction to **Links386 Pro**. The designers thought it ridiculous that the average computer golf game required as much computing power as could be found in a mainframe computer just a few years back, so they created their game with one central concern in mind: make it fun to play without requiring more than a 286/12 computer system. To their credit, they succeeded. If players doesn't expect **Links386** quality and refinement when booting up the game, they can still enjoy themselves quite a bit with **ProStaff Golf**.

The game comes with one course designed by the programmers. It's fun, and has some interesting holes, but can


AMAZON
A time when the world seemed more fantastic: and anything was possible!
Journey back in time to the year 1957 on an expedition to the dark heart of the Amazon Basin. A desparate, crazed message sends you on a perilous search through a land where legends come to life, danger hides behind every corner, and incredible treasures wait to be discovered.
AMAZON is designed in the style of the serials of the 1940's and 50's such as Flash Gordon, The Lost City, and Rocketman.
Reader Service No. 89
These serials were made up of intriguing, fast paced episodes which placed the hero in unbelievable peril. AMAZON contains 14 exciting episodes filled with plot twists, mysterious characters and heart stopping cliff-hangers. You haven't had this much fun since the drive-in days!
Metal monsters seek your destruction!*

get boring after a few rounds of straight play. That's why the game also includes perhaps the most complete array of golf game variations found in a computer simulation: stroke play, match play, match vs. par, two types of skins games, drop out, shoot out, and something called bingo-bango-bongo. Any of these game types can be played in team or individual format, and the scores can be figured as a gross score (handicap not included) or net score (handicap included). Up to ten human-controlled golfers can compete at one time. There are no computer players.

The graphics and sound, again, are not the absolute best, but they aren't the worst either. I'd put the them on par with **Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition**. The play mechanics are also surprisingly good. I was pleased to see so many different shot set-up options offered. The player can choose his or her club, stance, address, and where the club meets the ball. The latter is a matter of skill, and involves clicking the mouse when a roving red dot is positioned in the desired location. **ProStaff Golf** is a refreshing game. It offers great entertainment for a relatively small price, and doesn't require state-of-the-art hardware to function smoothly.

If Konami is onto something, maybe they can pass it along to the folks over at Electronic Arts. Their **World Tour Tennis** seems to be aimed at the same market segment as that of **ProStaff Golf**, but is not executed nearly as well. Like **ProStaff Golf**, **World Tour Tennis** does not ask for much in the way of hardware. It only requires 2.5 meg of hard drive space, and should not suffer any if played on a 286 machine. However, the game sends mixed messages that leave the player feeling that something is missing from the gaming experience.

For example, the player is dazzled with a catchy new-wave soundtrack and vivid, crisp graphics on the menu screens. During actual game play, however, the graphics are reduced to underwhelming two-dimensional images that can't fail to disappoint. The on-screen players are little more than boxes placed on top of stick figures, similar to what was used in **4-D Boxing**. I didn't like this motif then, and **World Tour Tennis** hasn't changed my mind.

The game's designers claim that by using this rudimentary rendering technique they can more accurately mirror the movements of actual tour pros. I don't buy it. Other games have not had to make such concessions to make the action believable, so I don't see why Electronic Arts maintains this position.

If one can overcome the graphics, the rest of **World Tour Tennis** is solid. The player can either participate in an exhibition match or a complete professional tour. The game can track player's careers as they advance through the tour, and it also offers an extensive practice facility to help players improve their skills throughout the season. The practice exercises even include feedback from a computer coach, as well as instant replay.

Let's face it, there aren't too many companies lining up to release state-of-the-art tennis simulations, so **World Tour Tennis** may have a fighting chance. It does have some strong points, especially its meager hardware requirements. In a more highly contested sector of the sports games market, however, **World Tour Tennis** wouldn't measure up.❑

Wilson ProStaff Golf

Designed by
Novotrade International

Published by
Konami

Systems
IBM PC

System Requirements
500K RAM, DOS 3.0 or higher, 286/12 Mhz or higher

Graphics
256 colour VGA

Supports
All major sound cards, mouse

Players
1-10

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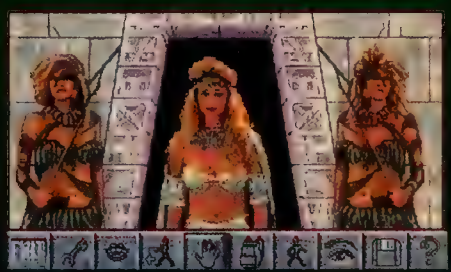
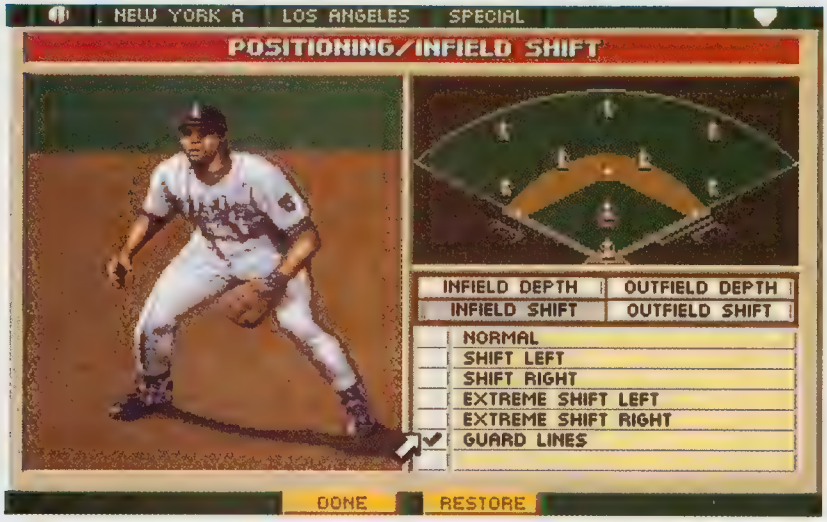


Gasp in disbelief at the lost tribe of Amazon women!*

*Actual Amazon VGA screens.

Tony LaRussa Baseball II

By Joseph McCullough



Designed by
Published by
Systems
IBM PC
System Requirements
Graphics
Supports
Players

Two years ago Strategic Simulations Inc. released **Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball**; what I then called a 'fantastic' game. For a first foray into the sports simulation market, SSI seemed to have done most everything right. Well, not *everything*. They failed to offer mouse support for anything other than choosing menu items. They also left out laser printer support.

Perhaps most annoying were some design flaws that made the game difficult to enjoy. The inability to pull up stats on base-runners was my biggest complaint. How can a player possibly know how to defend if he can't recall how fast the base runners are? Some fielding and base-running glitches also put a damper on things.

Still, for 1991, the game sure beat the pants off its direct competition. It was a joy to play even with its inherent imperfections.

Perceptions change. New games are released with better graphics, better sound, and more options. In 1992, Accolade succeeded in shrinking down Al Michaels and putting him on a computer disk for **Hardball III**. Later that year Micro Sports released the first modem-play baseball game, **Pro League Baseball**.

Baseball season

It's now 1993, and SSI has entered the baseball season with an all-new version of their flagship sports simulation, dubbed **Tony LaRussa Baseball II** (notice the *ultimate* is gone from the title). Is it better than the original? Yes. Have all the quirks been ironed out? No. Is it worth buying?

...The first thing one notices is the new drop-down menu interface. Anyone who has used a Mac will feel right at home navigating through the **Tony II** menu system. The designers even replaced the 'apple' menu with a baseball menu. Very cute.

A little harder to grasp is why SSI decided to fill the rest of the screen with a humongous picture of Tony LaRussa's head. Who knows, maybe it was in the contract (Sure, I'll put my name on your game, but my *head* has to be on the main menu screen!).

The navigation system is effective because the drop-down menus are available during any facet of the game. If they are hidden, one simply has to move the mouse to the top of the screen and they become active. This is a nice improvement over the traditional interface found in the original game.

In the same vein, SSI also improved the support layer of the game. The mouse is now available as an input device while playing. A joystick calibration routine is a mouse-click away.

Limited printer support is now offered, albeit not as fully functional as found in the competition. Instead of a complete ad hoc reporting engine like that found in **Pro League Baseball** or even **Earl Weaver II**, the print capabilities in **Tony II** are little more than screen redirects to the printer.

Talk that walk

In the gee-whiz department, SSI seems to have felt the heat from Accolade, because they spent what seems to be the majority of their efforts improving the

sound and graphics. For starters, **Tony II** boasts play-by-play commentary by Emmy award-winning announcer Ron Barr. This feature is executed well. There aren't as many disjointed phrases and clipped words as what tumbles out of Al Michaels' mouth in **Hardball III**. The content, however, is much less detailed in **Tony II**. Al Michaels announces the batter's jersey number, position, batting average, and box score for the game every time a new player steps up to the plate. Ron Barr can only manage the player's position.

As for graphics, they are still 256 colour VGA, but seem better rendered and more appealing to the eye. A major improvement was made in the game information area in the bottom center portion of the screen. In the original version the team names and score were drawn to resemble a lighted scoreboard. Looking at that for nine straight innings was a sure path to an eye-strain headache. Now the information is conveyed using a bold, very readable font. In addition, player portraits flank the info area, under which is the batter's average and pitcher's ERA.

Finally, some additional animation has been added to round out the game's visual appeal. Umpire calls now appear in pop-up boxes on the screen *à la* **Micro League Baseball 4**. A cartoon runs on the scoreboard when a home run has been hit. This is cute about twice, then gets in the way of game play. Close-up instant replays zero in on the action after a close call or fantastic play. These can be turned off if they become too irritating.

Visually and aurally, **Tony 2** has much more depth than the original; but is this enough to grab hard-earned dollars in a crowded baseball game market? Not necessarily. Fortunately the game's designers have added some new functionality to the game as well.

Ground rules

Those familiar with the original will remember the ground rules screen. This is where all game options are set. The player can still choose which team to control, as well as *how* he will control his team (which input device) and *how much* control he will have (play or manage-only). Additional choices allow the player to activate auto fielding, auto throwing, and auto base running. These latter choices do not affect manage-only mode.

What's new is the animation speed option. This serves two purposes. If playing on a super-fast or dog-slow PC, the player can adjust the software to the hardware. It can also be used to help out those of us with slower reflexes actually hit the ball as it whips across the plate.

Also new is the stadium info screen. This not only permits players to choose which ballpark in which to play, but also allows them to set weather conditions. The wind speed and direction can be set, as well as the humidity, temperature, and altitude. **Tony LaRussa Baseball II** - the baseball game of choice for 9 out of 10 television meteorologists.

Game play and team management hasn't changed much from the original, which is both good and bad. The game still offers a player draft and trade system, but the stock teams remain historic all-stars. Anyone who has the add-on team disks from **Ultimate Baseball** can convert these to work with **Tony II**, but I'd still like to see some more realistic teams offered by default. Players also still have the option of setting default lineups for use against right-handed or left-handed pitchers. The superb cadre of league management and scheduling utilities also remains.

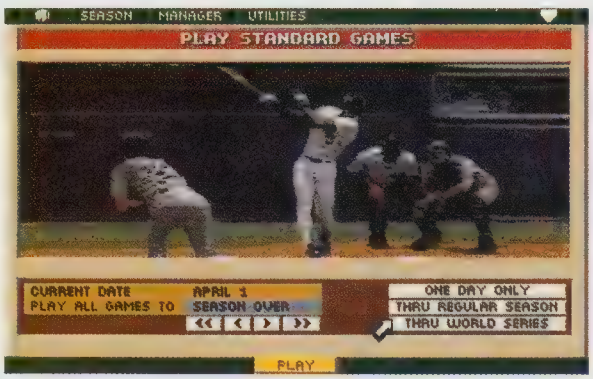
The singles game

But what of the design flaws that crept into the original? Unfortunately, they have not been completely eradicated. One still cannot bring up online stats for base-runners as is possible in other baseball games. In addition, a few new flaws in basic baseball logic have surfaced that will definitely deflate any baseball fanatic. There are far too many high one-hoppers to the pitcher when playing on an astro-turf field. Furthermore, these one-hoppers generally result in an infield single. I have yet to see the pitcher throw the runner out at first under these circumstances. Also, with runners at first and third and one out, the game will invariably try to throw the runner out at home after tagging second, instead of making the easy play at first to end the inning.

Crisp graphics

It's these little things that kept **Ultimate Baseball** from dominating the genre when it was first released, and it seems that the same types of shortcomings will haunt **Tony II**. To most, minor inconsistencies are a willing trade-off for the slick interface, play-by-play, crisp graphics, and smooth animation that defines any mass-market baseball game.

Others will lament the fact that 100% realism has been sacrificed to appeal to a wider audience. They will go back to playing **APBA Baseball** and wait for the day when the perfect marriage between statistical realism and killer graphics and sound becomes reality. It is frustrating that **Tony II** can't completely satisfy both audiences, but it gets an A for effort. Perhaps by version three SSI can put the 'ultimate' back in **Tony LaRussa Baseball.**❑



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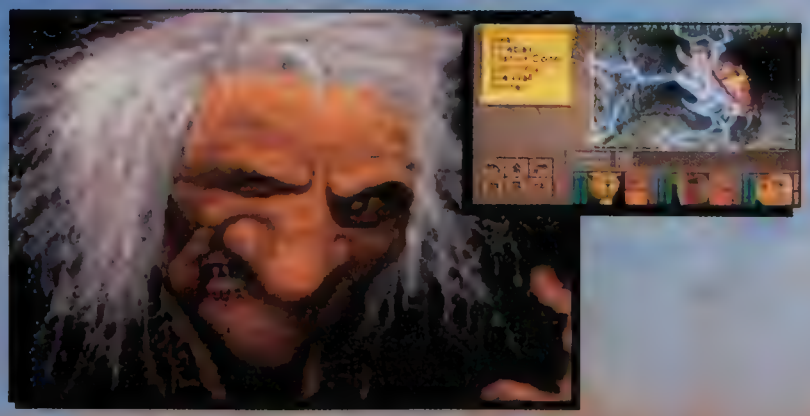

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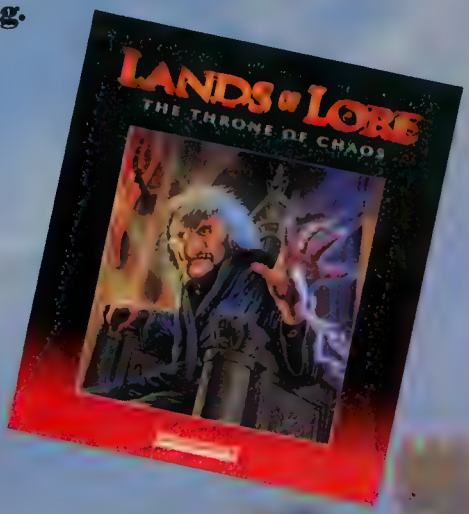

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CHIPPING CHART LINKS 386 PRO

By Steve Bowen

		FAIRWAY	ROUGH	HVY RGH	SAND
61	DOT 3	47 YD.	37 YD.	35 YD.	33 YD.
71	DOT 3	42 YD.	34 YD.	32 YD.	29 YD.
81	DOT 3	38 YD.	31 YD.	29 YD.	27 YD.
91	DOT 3	34 YD.	27 YD.	26 YD.	24 YD.
PW	DOT 3	30 YD.	24 YD.	23 YD.	21 YD.
61	DOT 2	26 YD.	21 YD.	19 YD.	18 YD.
71	DOT 2	23 YD.	18 YD.	17 YD.	16 YD.
81	DOT 2	21 YD.	17 YD.	16 YD.	15 YD.
SW	DOT 3	20 YD.	16 YD.	15 YD.	14 YD.
91	DOT 2	18 YD.	15 YD.	14 YD.	13 YD.
PW	DOT 2	15 YD.	12 YD.	11 YD.	10 YD.
LW	DPT 3	13 YD.	10 YD.	9 YD.	9 YD.
SW	DOT 2	11 YD.	9 YD.	8 YD.	8 YD.
LW	DOT 2	9 YD.	7 YD.	6 YD.	6 YD.

PITCHING CHART

		FAIRWAY	ROUGH	HVY RGH	SAND
91	DOT 5	80 YD.	64 YD.	60 YD.	56 YD.
PW	DOT 5	70 YD.	56 YD.	53 YD.	49 YD.
SW	DOT 5	60 YD.	48 YD.	45 YD.	42 YD.
91	DOT 3	50 YD.	40 YD.	38 YD.	35 YD.
PW	DOT 3	40 YD.	32 YD.	30 YD.	28 YD.
SW	DOT 3	30 YD.	24 YD.	23 YD.	21 YD.

Notes: the theory behind this chart is that it is easier to learn the timing for two exact swings and to vary club selection, than to stick with one chipping club and try to always hit different swing points. Chip chart uses swing set to 'chip'; pitch chart uses swing set to 'straight'. The distances in the chip chart are well tested for accuracy. However, differences in elevation between the lie of the ball and the flag must be taken into account. For example: if you are 26 yds out on the fairway but the flag is 8 ft higher than the lie you cannot hit a 6 iron 2 dot - you must go up to a pitching wedge 3 dot.

Michael Jordan in Flight

By Joseph McCullough

If any man can fly, Michael Jordan can. So it's not surprising that in making **Michael Jordan In Flight**, the game's designers employed flight simulation technology to capture the essence of Air Jordan. Yes, that's right, flight simulation technology. In applying new programming techniques to a sports game, Mike Suarez and Greg Zumwalt have created a visual feast that's like nothing seen before. Though the rest of the game is rather sparse, the sound, graphics, and animation put **Michael Jordan In Flight** into the stratosphere.

Most basketball simulations prior to **Michael Jordan In Flight** gave the player a stationary half-court view of the action. This was effective, but unexciting. **Road to the Final Four** took the animation a step further by offering a 'director' mode in which the computer would switch court views depending on the action. If this feature were implemented better, it may have been a breakthrough. But since the game's graphics were so poor, most people shut the annoyance off.

Michael Jordan In Flight is a *true* innovation. Instead of following game play with one or a series of static cameras, the game places a camera behind the active player, and follows his actions in full 360° panorama. This is where the flight simulation technology has been used. Like piloting a jet fighter through the skies, the player navigates Jordan through a swarm of defenders to reach the goal and slam one home.

Adding to the excitement are Super VGA graphics and superb sound effects. Players with certain 1 meg video cards can take advantage of 640 x 400 resolution with 256 colours, which equals the quality found in **Links386 Pro**. Others will have to settle for straight 320 x 200 256 colors, but this is hardly a sacrifice. The Super VGA graphics are especially good because of the way the graphics were created. Instead of drawing characters with a paint program, the game's designers photographed Jordan and other players exhibiting all the moves found in the NBA. They then digitized these images and rendered them in high-resolution graphics. The result is remarkably realistic.

To top it all off, **Michael Jordan In Flight** contains the some of the best sound effects ever heard in a computer sports simulation, as well as comments from the man himself. Go in strong and dunk and Jordan says, 'In your face!' Throw up a brick and he quips, 'What a hack!'

Once past the graphics, animation, and sound, is there anything left? Unfortunately, not a whole lot. **Michael Jordan In Flight** is a three-on-three game exclusively. There are variations available — the player can choose either exhibition or tournament play, one of three difficulty levels, whether or not to call fouls, winners' or losers' outs, quarter length, and whether or not to actually participate in the action — but that's it. I'd like to see a one-on-one game, or even a two-on-two, but this is not supported. Also missing is a multi-player option, and a way to edit player stats or create new players.

This is not to say that the game is boring. It is fun and exciting to play. Besides, outside of its limited play options, **Michael Jordan In Flight** does contain most of the *de facto* features found in other basketball games. Four set plays are included that can be executed any time the player has possession of the ball. Also, before each exhibition game, as well as before any tournament begins, the player can review the pool of available players and assemble his team. After each game and at halftime, individual and team statistics are displayed which summarize shooting percentages, rebounds, blocks, steals, and total points.

Another fun feature is the game's replay facility, which not only allows players to save their favorite plays, but also includes an impressive replay editor. Since the game can capture images from all sides, the camera can be moved to whatever position gives the most exciting view of the game.

The action can also be slowed down or sped up at any time. In capable hands, this feature can be used to turn rote replays into full-blown highlight films. For an exciting look at new technology, **Michael Jordan In Flight** is worth the money. It brings a new level of realism to a genre of sports simulations that has seen few new ideas. For basketball variety and long-lasting fun, however, the game comes up short.

Had the designers spent as much effort adding game features as they did perfecting the animation, **Michael Jordan In Flight** would be an instant classic. As it stands, the game doesn't offer enough substance to endure longer than a few months.❑

Designed by
Mike Suarez, Greg Zumwalt, Michael Jordan

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
IBM PC

System Requirements
386/16Mhz, EMS 4.0 driver, 2 meg RAM, 3.5 meg hard disk space. For SVGA a video card that has 1 meg of RAM and supports 640x480 256 colors is required

Graphics
VGA, Super VGA with requisite hardware

Supports
All major sound cards, mouse, joystick

Two's Company

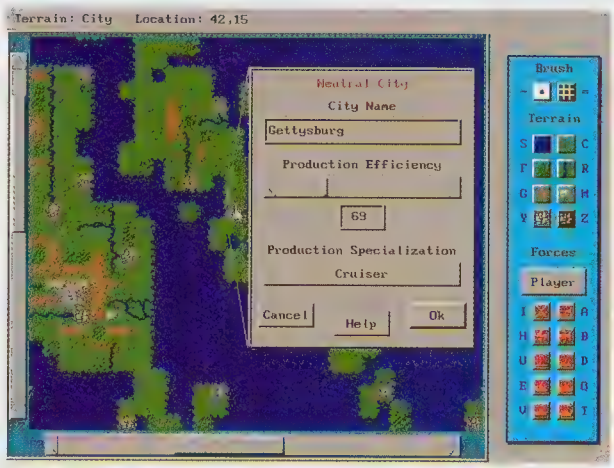
The column for the well connected by Brian Walker

The big news for fans of modem games is that **Empire Deluxe** is now available and supports just about every kind of multiplayer mode imaginable: e-mail, network, direct and null modem are all possible. That's the good news. The bad news is that while many of these options are possible, they are not exactly feasible. Given the game length, network seems unrealistic play in most working environments. Even playing short games can be a career threatening activity in most offices.

The modem options are more realistic, but then one runs into the problem of the game design. The campaigns and scenarios are open ended which of course means some very lengthy games. Even by null modem these can descend into tedium as there is no goal to aim at, but when played by modem there is the additional burden of huge phone bills. Resignations are unlikely as no indication is given as to how opponents are faring. No reports are provided not even at game end, even if such a landmark is ever reached.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that games should be designed specifically for modem play, but in the case of **Empire Deluxe**, modifications to the design would have benefitted solo as well as multiplayer mode. The problem is that the designers seem to have regarded the design of the original **Empire** as a sacred cow that needed only interface and graphical improvements. But **Empire** was designed in 1978, so when people talk of it being a 'great game' this has to be borne in mind. There were hardly any strategy games available for computer then so it's only natural that people should froth when **Empire** turned up out of the blue. Much has happened in computer game design since that far-off time, but other than cosmetic changes, few of these innovations have made their way into **Empire Deluxe**. The 'innovations' in fact, revolve around the ancient art of game design, the aspect in which **Empire Deluxe** is most lacking.

I would have liked to have seen the pre-designed scenarios (at least) incorporate some goals such as the ones in the Tournament scenario, but this does not even end (on turn 200) when it is supposed to, nor is there any end of game report. Reports on all players should be incorporated to be able to assess one's own relative position. None of these proposed changes would greatly affected the integrity of the game. They would improve multiplayer games (by virtue of making them more manageable) and add information on which to make informed decisions - the essence of good game design. The 'campaigns' could have been left open ended so that players who want to spend the rest of their lives exploring and conquering virgin territory are perfectly free to do so. Choices: another key aspect of game design. The scenario editor included with the game should have allowed players to modify scenarios to their hearts desire, but unfortunately they are hamstrung by the inflexibility of the master program. Terrain cannot be modified and most importantly, there is no facility to create new rule sets as per **Global Conquest** or **XConq** (**Empire's** superior UNIX brother). All of this leaves me with the feeling that **Empire Deluxe** resembles a shell program looking for a game.



Empire Deluxe: sacred cow

Merit Software remind me that their games **Operation COM BAT** and **Medieval Warriors** both support modem play and are currently available at the bargain price of $10 each. Mindcraft's **Ambush**, the human version of **Siege**, will not support modem play, at least initially. There is a possibility that this will be included in scenario disks, as per **Siege** but this is unconfirmed. Mindcraft say that modem play in **Siege** had some problems, especially on slower machines. Tech support and opponents for their modem game can be reached on the Mindcraft BBS: 310 320 5196 (8N1, 300-14400 bps).

Electronic Arts say that **Syndicate** will support network play, but not modem play. Interplay have confirmed that **Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space** will not support modem play, at least on the floppy version. However, the enhanced CD ROM version to be released later in the year will definitely feature a modem option. Interplay say that adding modem support to the floppy version would have added too much to the schedule of an already late product.

On the errata front, Dynamix' **Aces of the Pacific** does not support modem play as we implied in a previous issue. Sorry to all those of you who frantically scoured the manual looking for this non-existent option.❑

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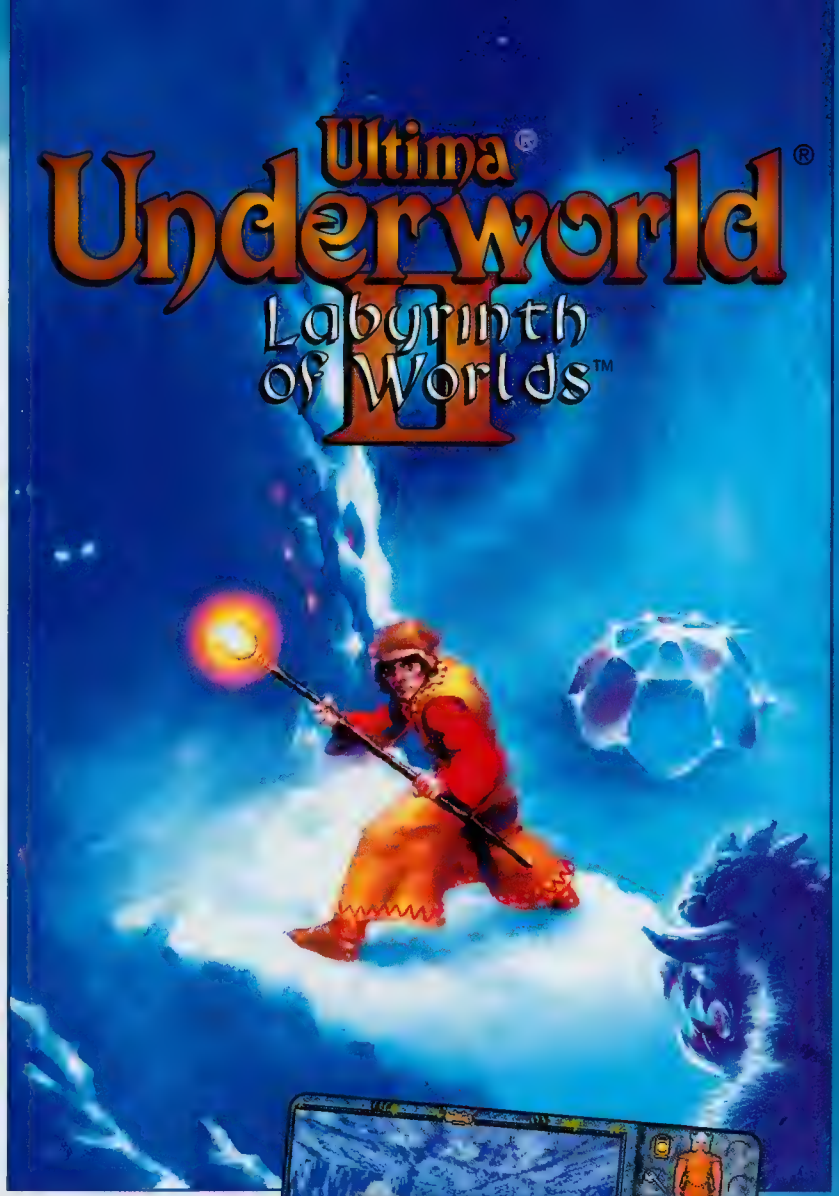

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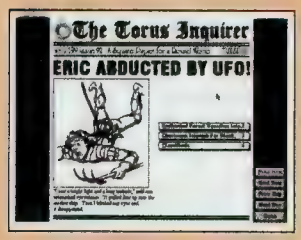

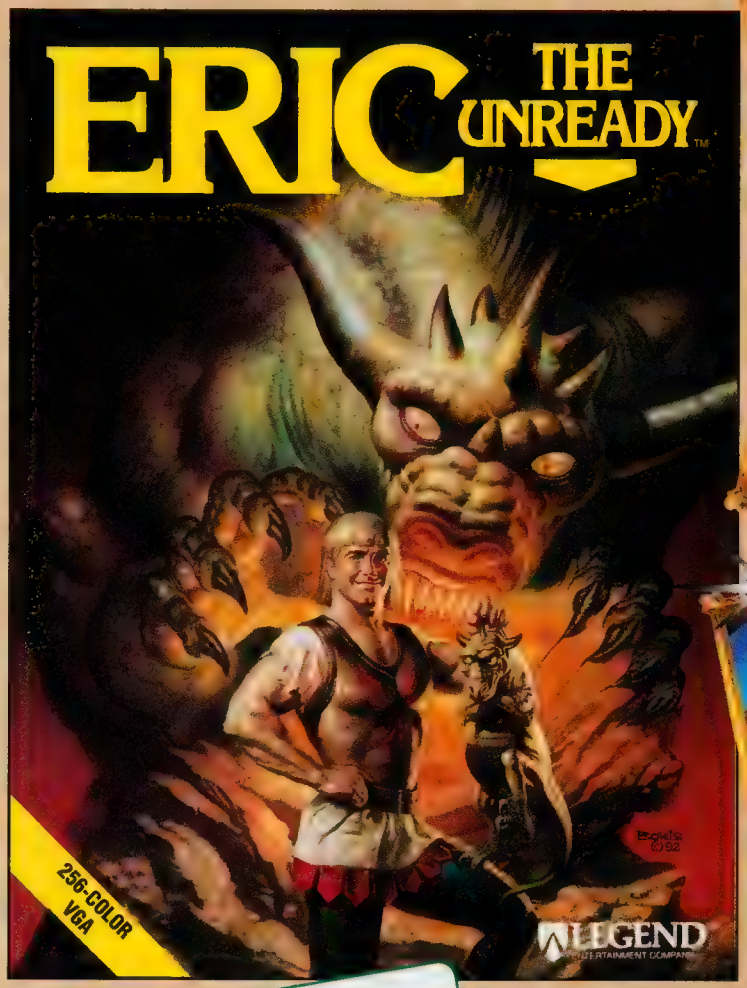

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—Computer Game Review

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—Game Bytes Magazine

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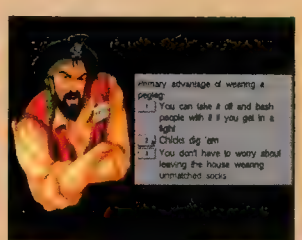

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Reader Service No. 110

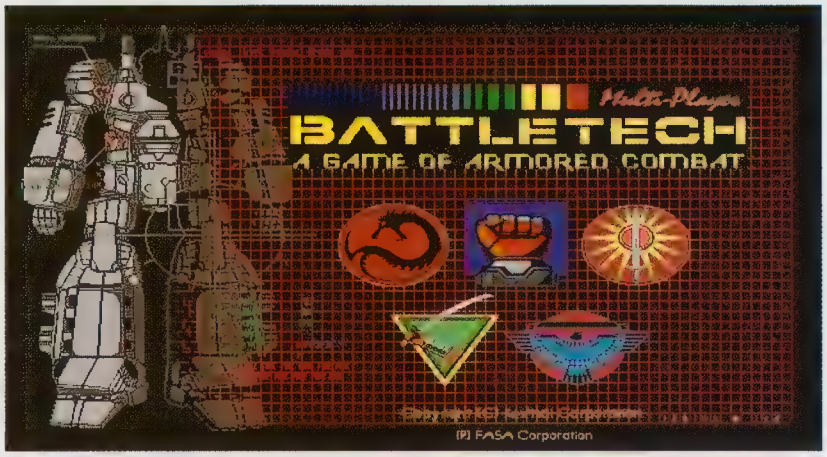
MultiPlayer BattleTech

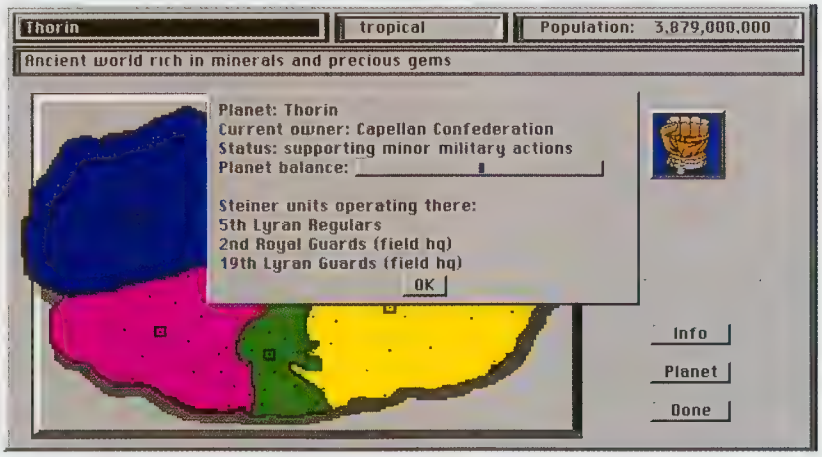
By Lee Johnson

Readers who have played Activision's **MechWarrior** game should have no trouble getting to grips with GENie's new on-line game **MultiPlayer BattleTech** (**MPBT**). The game is set in the Inner Sphere of FASA's **BattleTech** universe, before the Fourth Succession War.[1] The star systems of the game domain are divided among a number of Great Houses, which exist in a state of constant tension. The Houses square off against each other in skirmishes fought with BattleMechs ('mechs), giant humanoid war machines piloted by lone humans. Players in **MPBT** assume the role of 'mech pilots.

Each planet on the game map has a number of locations, organised like rooms in an adventure game. There are a number of different locales at any given planet: starports, dropships, new and used 'mech shops, banks, training facilities, even bars where a group of people can slip into a booth to discuss strategy in private.

An icon representing the player's current location is displayed in the top left area of the screen, with other icons arranged around it to indicate possible exits to the north, south, east, or west. Clicking on one of the surrounding icons moves the player from one location to the next. The centre of the screen is used for messages. Informative messages appear to notify the player when other people enter or leave the room. In addition, the player can type messages to the others in that room, and read their replies in the message window.





C-mail

In addition to the usual on-line chats, **MPBT** players may send each other electronic mail messages, called ComStar messages, or simply CStars. Every planet has a ComStar office from which players may send notes to individuals, or to groups of people within their organisation. The system notifies the player when a new CStar arrives, and allows the message to be read without requiring the player to travel to a ComStar office first.

Players joining the game for the first time are asked to choose a House affiliation. They are then assigned to the House academy for 'mech training. 'Mechs are divided into three classes: light, medium, and heavy. Heavy 'mechs tend to be well-armoured and equipped with powerful weapons, while light 'mechs favour speed and maneouverability. Medium 'mechs fall between the two.

With few exceptions, most houses first train pilots in the use of light 'mechs. Successful completion of training earns the rookie pilot a commission in the House's armed forces, and allows him to pilot House-owned 'mechs of that class. As pilots progress, they may be invited to train in other 'mech classes.

Players either belong to a military unit, or to a mercenary unit. The military units are organised in a hierarchy: As many as four pilots are grouped together into a small fighting unit, called a lance. Lances are in turn organised into brigades, which are in turn part of larger units. The mercenary units owe allegiance to no particular House, but contract their services for profit. They have their own internal hierarchy, just as the military organisations do.

The Minnesota tribe

When I completed the assigned set of training missions, I was assigned to the 1st Brigade of the Fusiliers of Oriente, House Marik. Unfortunately, I didn't know where the brigade was operating, and my superior officer was not on-line. While I was wandering around, wondering what to do, I made the acquaintance of one of the many mercenaries who frequent the

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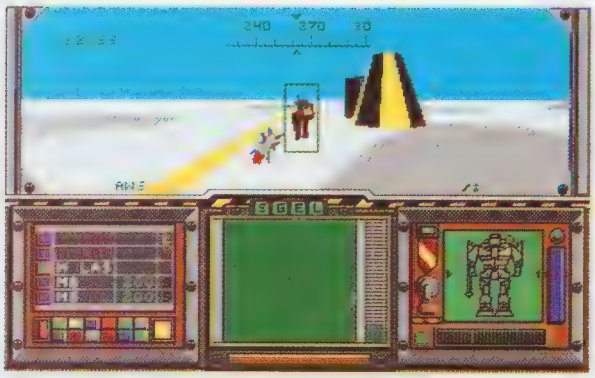


MPBT universe. He quickly determined that I was a greenhorn, without a 'mech of my own. Leading me to a local bank, he transferred a large sum of credits to my account, then directed me to a nearby 'mech shop, where I purchased a Marauder heavy 'mech. His generosity got me off to a good start in the game. Before long, I was persuaded to resign my Marik commission and accept a position with the Minnesota Tribe, a mercenary group with a sizeable membership.

There are certain advantages to owning 'mechs. First of all, the class of the 'mech becomes unimportant: A player can pilot any 'mech he owns, without having completed the corresponding training. In other words, the training restrictions only apply to 'mechs which are provided by the House. Secondly, the player can be assured of having a decent 'mech for every mission, since the House doesn't always provide the most formidable machines for its pilots.

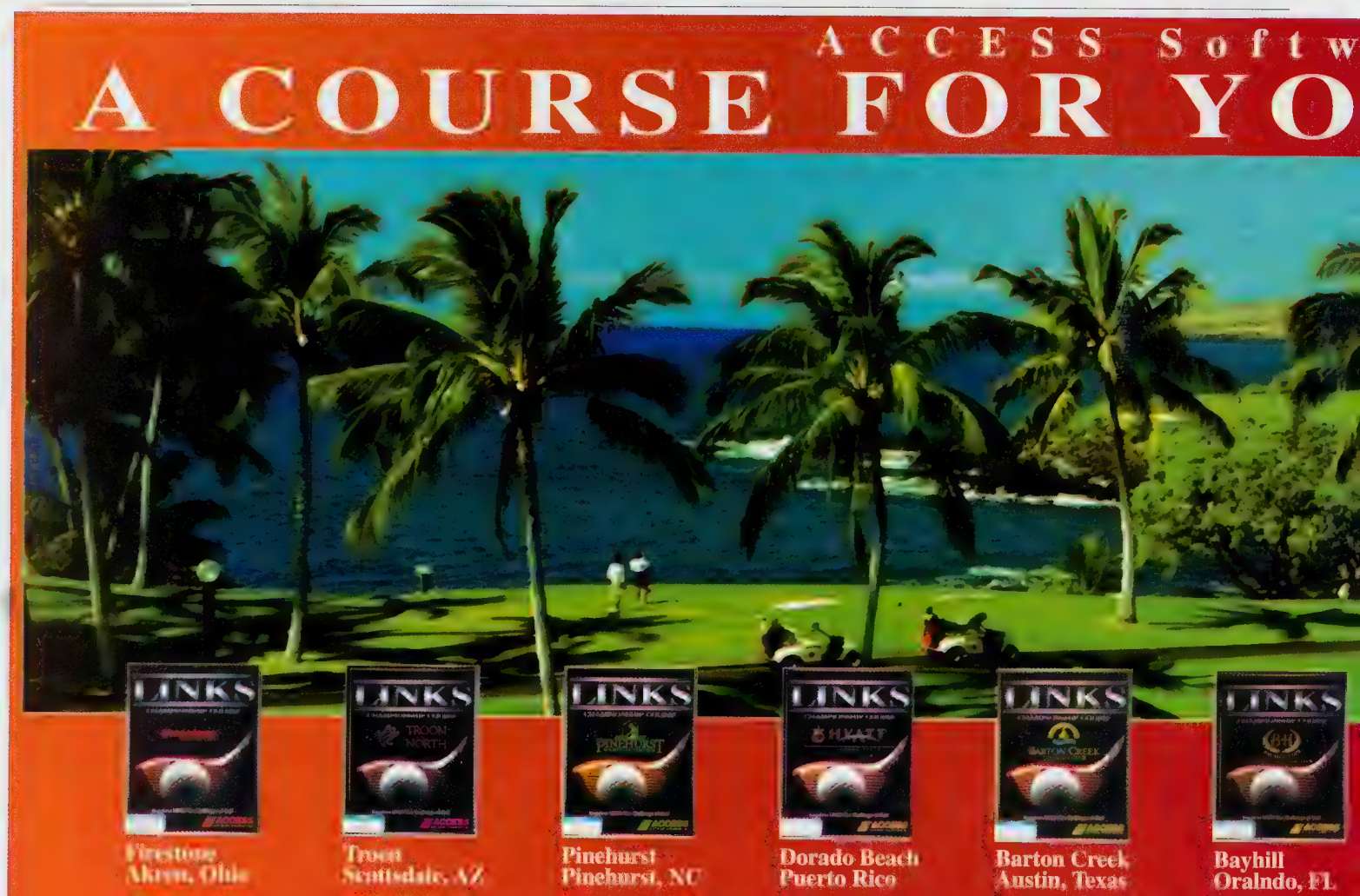
Houses in Motion

At any given time, the galaxy contains a number of hot spots, where Houses seek to expand their holdings by capturing rival planets. These battles of conquest are fought against one to four computer-controlled droid 'mechs. Each victory tips the planetary balance a little more in favour of the winner. At the same time, the defenders battle against enemy droids, seeking to push the balance in their own favour.

If the balance crosses a certain threshold, the aggressors take over the planet, and the roles of attacker and defender are reversed. The capture of a planet requires many successful battles, and can take a number of days to complete, even with merc units assisting in the fight. Successful missions bring a share of the profits, and eventual promotion. With accumulated earnings, a player can purchase new 'mechs, or obtain repairs and ammunition for 'mechs he already owns. Over time, a player may accumulate several 'mechs, and an assortment of spare parts. For example, though I preferred my Marauder, I kept a Rifleman handy as a spare, in case the Marauder sustained damage that couldn't be repaired immediately.

Each planet has a dropship room, where players may select missions against one to four computer opponents. Although the computer recommends an even match of human and computer pilots, moderately skilled players can successfully fight and win against unfavourable odds. After a mission is chosen, players proceed through an adjoining room; when the last participant has entered, the pilots are transported to the battlefield.

MPBT uses the same basic 3-D polygon graphics that **MechWarrior** uses; the terrain is mostly flat, punctuated by



pyramidal hills which obstruct certain lines of sight and hinder movement. The 'mechs themselves are rendered as colourful animated 3-D models, detailed enough to distinguish arms, legs, weapons, and other features. Unlike **MechWarrior**, **MPBT**'s graphics engine has been enhanced to take processor speed into account. That means that events take place at the same rate on a fast machine as on a slower one: the extra speed is used to produce smoother graphics.

The 'mech cockpit contains a number of readouts to display speed, heat, weapon status, and other information. The pilot can target other 'mechs and determine how badly each of their major components have been damaged. A number of keyboard controls allow the pilot to maneouver the 'mech and its weapons, obtain tactical data, and communicate with other members of your team.

Teamwork can be used to devastating advantage. One common tactic is to line up shoulder-to-shoulder, concentrating the entire team's firepower on individual 'mechs as they approach. A good lance leader will keep his units in close proximity to each other, focused on only one or two objectives at a time. Disorganised units stand a greater risk of falling prey to enemy fire.

Solaris

Though enjoyable, **MPBT** suffers from the same basic flaw as **MechWarrior**: A 'mech's legs are ridiculously vulnerable to attack. Once a player has perfected his aim, it becomes a relatively simple matter to target all of a 'mech's heavy firepower at one of an enemy 'mech's legs. A few well-placed blasts of a particle cannon will cause most 'mechs to topple and fall, effectively removing them from battle. As a result, combat against droid 'mechs eventually becomes routine, even tedious.

Fortunately, players can travel to the game world of Solaris, where one to four human pilots, arranged in teams of the players' choice, can square off against each other for sport. It is unfortunate that military missions do not pit humans against humans, because living, breathing opponents make worthy adversaries on the battlefield. For this reason, formal tournaments are often scheduled in the various sectors of Solaris City.

At the time of this writing, **MPBT** is still in an open beta testing phase. The system's designers have made occasional changes to improve play balance and add new features. In the meantime **MPBT** remains an enoyable game, especially so against human opponents.❑

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Reader Service No. 89

Dear Judith

Headbutting the monitor can be a deeply satisfying, but somewhat expensive experience. Our Auntie Judith, while not short of a bit of the old visceral herself, offers a cheaper solution to your problems

Dear Judith,
I own a 486/20 with an Oak Technology VGA card that has 256k of RAM on it. My question is: on certain programs there is a very noticeable vertical line every half inch apart on the screen. Please help me and guide me to the best solution to the problem.

Scott Dimmick
Brick, NJ 08724

The problem is almost certainly caused by the lack of RAM on your card. See if you can get an upgrade to at least 512k. If not, then consider getting a new card with 1 meg of RAM (minimum) on it.

Dear Judith,
I am having two problems, one with memory and one with graphics. First the memory problem. I have recently installed a SoundBlaster Pro Mulitmedia kit. Now when I try to play most of my games they won't run and I get a 'not enough memory' type message. I have a Zeos DX266 with an SVGA, NCR Graphics card. I am running DOS 5.0. I am also having graphics problems with a number of games, among them **Civilization**. The graphics are so messed up that sometimes the screen blinks in different colors.

Jeff Catt
Columbus, OH 43224

Yes indeed, Jeff, you do have a memory problem and everything you try to load is landing in conventional memory. The memory problem is easy to fix. Make this change to the line in config.sys:

DEVICE=C:\WINDOWS\EMM386.EXE RAM 1024 I=B000-B7FF FRAME=E000.

You should now start loading drivers with the DEVICEHIGH command, and be sure to load them starting with the largest first, then the next largest and so on down the ladder. If something isn't going to fit and end up in conventional memory, you want it be as small a driver as possible. You should try to load them in this order: MSCDEX, SMARTDRV, MOUSE, SOFTMODE, SBPCD, etc. Also, I would recommned loading SMARTDRV with the DEVICEHIGH command in config.sys and the MOUSE with LOADHIGH from your autoexec.bat.

Now, because of the CDROM driver, you may not get everything loaded high. You might want to consider omitting the CDROM drivers and having a boot disk handy for when you plan to use CDROM. You will have to see how memory looks after you make these changes. I don't need to remind you that you should have a boot disk handy just in case something doesn't work as planned!

Unfortunately your video problem is of a more serious nature. There is a known compatibility problem between the NCR SVGA video card and many games - one of those games, as you have discovered, is Civilization. I phoned ZEOS and they told that they were no longer using the NCR card.

I have heard a rumor that NCR is planning to put out a fix for the palette problems the card is having, but I have no firm answer on that. If your ZEOS is still under warranty, you should telephone them and see if you can't get the card upgraded. I believe that upgrades to both the Diamond/Stealth and Diamond/Viper are available.

Dear Judith,
I am planning to buy a new PC and am considering buying one with VESA Local Bus. Is VLB worth the extra money?

That's really a difficult question to answer. On the surface the answer is 'yes' - go for it. However, underneath all these glowing words about what VLB will do to increase your video frame rate are some frankly disturbing facts. Some of the newest games out are having trouble running on PCs with VESA. Granted companies are up-loading fixes as fast as they can turn them out, but that still doesn't change the fact that some applications are having trouble with this new technology. And of course, if older games won't run, I doubt if you will see patches for them from the publishers.

Some of the statistical evidence for VLB is rather interesting. Using standard industry benchmarks, the overall performance increase in an application will be in the 2% to 5% range, although the video by itself will be much higher. Also, Intel has developed their own local bus standard, PCI, and early spec sheets indicate that it is far more advanced than VLB. I would not want to bet against Intel!

To my way of thinking VESA is just a near-term solution around the bottleneck between processor and video memory. But VLB cards will not be able to keep up with the next generation of processors which, given the current rate of technology growth, will be here in a few years. IBM has already demonstrated its 100mhz Blue Lightning chip at Comdex, plus, the Pentium will probably arrive this year. Since the smart money is betting on Intel's PCI to win the local bus wars, I personally would sit tight and wait - unless, of course, you have money to burn.

Dear Judith,
I am buying a new video card. Should I get one with the S3 chipset or with the ET4000 chipset?

The answer to that question is: 'it depends.' What will be the primary use for your new PC? Will you be playing mostly games, or are you going to be running Windows and other GUI applications? The S3 and the ET4000 are the two most popular chipset used in the major video cards today. Most reviewers (and this is confirmed by benchmarks) rate the S3 as faster than the ET4000. However, there are some 'gotchas' here to be on the look out for. The S3 is mostly used as a Windows accelerator since what it does best and fastest is 'paint' small images in various locations on the screen. In other words, it is great for GUI applications.

The ET4000 is a frame buffered chip and it is better at painting whole frames on the screen. If your main use of the PC will be for games, then I would definitely get a card that used the ET4000 chip set.

Dear Judith,
Recently I have noticed ads for equipment to clean your PC's floppy diskette drives. I know that tape cassette drives have to be cleaned regularly. Should I get one of these kits to clean my floppy drives?

Probably the worst thing you could do for your floppy diskette drive is to clean it with any of the commercially advertised diskette cleaners. Many of these use an abrasive such as isopropyl alcohol. The isopropyl alcohol leaves a residue on the heads and when the heads touch the diskette, the alcohol on them eats the diskette coating: bye-bye data.

A recent study found that very few diskette drives fail due to dirty heads, and more crap-out due to the use of commercial diskette cleaning kits. The most effective cleaner is an ordinary, but good quality, scratch diskette.❑

Readers desiring a quick response to their problems should enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Please be sure to include system configurations for all hardware related problems. The address to write to is:
Judith Weller,
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Actual IBM VGA screen photos.

Reader Service No. 10

Down the Upgrade Path

Bugs, Glitches, Undocumented Features - You're dead!

	Publisher/Game	New Features
408 737 6800	**SSI** **Great Naval Battles North Atlantic**	Update to **Great Naval Battles of the North Atlantic**. There is also a new readme file that explains much about the workings of **GNB** and the patch.
	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	Upgrade to 1.1
408 955 1700	**ACCOLADE** **Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition v1.5 Rev.**	This rev fixes the **Mini-M**oses effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. This file contains GOLF.EXE, READ.ME and RESULTS.EXE and is for v1.4 owners only. If you have a previous version you will need to obtain JNSE14.ZIP also, which contains the additional v1.4 DESIGN.EXE file not included here.
301 926 8300	**BETHESDA SOFTWORKS** **Wayne Gretzky Hockey III**	This version fixes CH FlightStick and other throttle control (non-standard) joysticks. Scoring and penalties have been adjusted. For more specific information and additional fixes see the enclosed README file.
	Hockey League Simulator II	Upgrade to version 1.1
209 683 4468	**SIERRA ON-LINE/DYNAMIX** **486 Sound Blaster Driver for VGA Games**	This file is for 486 owners encountering initialization difficulties with either the Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, or the Thunder Board when playing a Sierra game. Please read the READ.ME file before installing the driver to the appropriate game subdirectory. Note: These drivers will work for all games released *after* Space Quest IV.
	Island of Dr Brain	Update Patches Fixes Ooops 10 error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. Read the README file before applying patches.
	Red Baron Mission Builder	Fix for STB VGA card BIOS problems. This patch is only necessary for customers with STB VGA cards experiencing multiple screens in the Mission Builder screen.
	Front Page Sports Football	Enhancement program that addresses a number of issues.
310 320 5215	**MINDCRAFT** **Star Legions**	Fixes some problems with lockups on specific machine specifications. It also fixes the problem with phasers firing out of the FOV, some changes to mission ratings, fixes to the award sequence, etc.
	Sound Blaster fix	New set of Mindcraft Sound Blaster drivers to fix incompatibility ('SoundBlaster not working') with the latest Sound Blaster boards. These files can go into the game directory for any of our recent games. Just copy files into the game directory and the program will load automatically.
	Magic Candle III **Update to Version 1.13**	This update fixes some problems with an incorrectly named AdLib file and also some treasures that were not appearing in the game. Some fixes to speeches given (or not being given) by NPCs are also included. Update that Includes are fixes for Charter/Scepter exchange which was damaged in version 1.15; Mirror of Honesty/candle wick problem where items could not be dug up; characters transfered from MC2 not getting god's boons.
305 935 3995	**GAMETEK** **Humans**	This removes the crash out bug on level 21 of HUMANS that occurs on some 5.25 versions of the game out there. Just replace the EXE file with the enclosed EXE file.
708 866 1864	**D C TRUE** **Shadow President**	We have released this maintenance patch in order to fix several minor problems that were found in the original release. To determine if this patch is needed, check the date on a file named SHADOW.EXE in the directory containing **Shadow President**. Do this by changing to the **Shadow President** directory and typing DIR SHADOW.EXE. If the date on this file is prior to 11/24/92, this patch will be needed. Update patch that will save 30k of RAM
510 254 9700	**MAXIS** **Sim Life**	This is the patch for the DOS problems. If you are having problems with your mouse, call the manufacturer of your mouse to get the latest upgrade. Special mouse veterinarian on call 24 hours a day at your local friendly dealer through your local telephone service or through any on-line service.

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Upgrades *cont'd*

	Publisher/Game	New Features
801 359 2900	**ACCESS** **Amazon**	This fixes the problem of getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. Just copy this file into the **Amazon** directory and it will allow you to get the raft.
	Links 386 Pro	Update Version 1.08. This is the current **Links 386 Pro** update Version and includes the new executable file and the original 1.07 VESA Library. The executable now allows the game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. Note: Some of those other operating systems/software may require restricting or even disabling any sound cards in use. The Compaq VESA driver is not yet available. Compaq has said it will be another 4 to 6 weeks before they will allow Access to provide it in their VESA Library.
410 771 0440	**MICROPROSE** **World Circuit** **(North American) Modem Update (IBM)**	This file is the North American version modem update for WORLD CIRCUIT. After downloading, unzip it to a FLOPPY DISK and then run the program
	Mantis **Update for Diskette Version (IBM)**	Update for Diskette Version. This updates adds new features and improved gameplay. This update is NOT for the CD-ROM version of the game.
	Twilight 2000	Update for adds extra sound and graphics, and includes a new ending to the game.
512 328 5490	**ORIGIN** **Underworld II**	Major upgrade
	Ultima VII	Upgrade patch for that will allow you to upgrade your old version (3.0) to the new version (3.4). This version has a detector that will check savegames for corruption. If it detects corruption it will ask you if you want to terminate.
818 973 4015	**DISNEY** **Stunt Island**	Latest update that also contains helpful information about the program.
708 215 5100	**KONAMI** **Batman Returns**	Latest update
908 788 2799	**QQP** **Solitaire's Journey**	Patch that updates the original version 1.0 to the current version 1.03. It fixes a couple of minor bugs and provides improved mouse support. You probably only need this file if you have had a problem with saved Tournament games or if you are having problems using your mouse.
615 842 2098	**MICRO SPORTS** **Pro League Football**	This upgrade contains fixes, upgrades, and additional schedules.
408 879 9144	**THREE SIXTY** **V for Victory: Utah Beach 2.0.**	A comprehensive upgrade that improves the quality of the AI amongst other things. Available to registered users for $5 only from Three Sixty.
	Harpoon 1.3.	Fixes everything short of global warming.
303 660 8354	**COLORADO CREATIONS** **High Command 1.1.**	See comments for **Harpoon 1.3**
708 520 4440	**ICOM SIMULATIONS** **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective**	This version corrects problems with audio and video cards with non-standard settings. It also searches for a Pro Audio Spectrum card before a Sound Blaster, allowing PAS16 owners to use the PAS instead of SB.

All of these patches are available free to regsistered users. If you are such a body, then contact the company concerned. Those with modems can download these files from commercial bulletin boards such as CompuServe and GENie.

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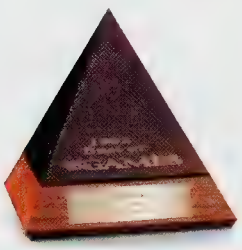
"Hot, very very hot"
– PC Review

"The cutting edge of sound technology"
– PC Entertainer

"Well worth the wait"
– PC Games



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End of the world

I am very angry with Lucasarts over **X Wing**. I'm outraged that Lucasarts takes the public for granted. I feel that Lucasarts is insensitive to game players and I'm very angry. They do not support the Thrustmaster or rudder pedals in **X Wing**.

Every other game company that I know does. Why don't they? They have had enough time to program it. I feel that they are lording it over us because they have a monopoly on *Star Wars* and have no competition. I will not buy any more **X Wing** disks until this is corrected. Please bring this problem to your readers attention.

Richard Ordway
Boulder, CO 80304

Russian roulette

I feel the need to vent my spleen re the recent comments in your magazine on **V For Victory: Velikiye Luki**. After reading Mr Steve Wartofsky's comments in issue 28 on the Nazi view of history supposedly put forward by the game manual, I took out the manual again and read it front to back. I tried to find the supposed hidden Nazi support, but it sounded like simple history being retold. And now Mr Wartofsky, number 1: Having to pull out a dictionary to follow along with someone tells me he thinks he's writing something dealing with the discovery of the 'missing link' instead of reviewing a game (*sic*). For a computer mag, 'xenophobia,' 'obfuscating,' 'schismatic,' 'manifestations?' Hey, Einstein Junior, lighten up.

But back to the manual. Figuring I had been corrupted and turned into a Nazi lover, I decided to get a couple of other opinions from two of my college professors. They felt that the German and Russian assessments were highly accurate. Could Germany have crushed Russia if some other decisions had been made? Most likely, yes. Does having these opinions make me a Nazi lover? I think not.

I will say that I thought the picture of the German soldier at the end of the game was inappropriate, and if that had been left out a lot of the comments on the manual wouldn't have been made in my opinion.

Finally, the thing that really pissed me off in your April issue. The manual is being rewritten for the upcoming **Market Garden** and disparaging references to allied troops and glorification of Nazi efforts removed. I think you owe it to your readers to show how Three Sixty is twisting history by printing comments in the manual that are such lies. This stinks of censorship. If a British unit performs like shit in **Market Garden** I want to know. And if a German unit performs well I want to know. Boo and hiss to Three Sixty for caving in so easily without defending themselves.

Scott Boire
Ottumina, IA 52501

*Atomic Games were responsible for the manual, not Three Sixty. Atomic were unhappy about many of the comments in the **Market Garden** manual which was written by Ed Rains (a non employee of the company) before the **Velikiye Luki** row blew up. Atomic have now severed their relationship with Mr Rains completely. It was Atomic's decision to rewrite parts of it, and a joint decision between Three Sixty and Atomic Games to remove the dedication to the Nazi from **Velikiye Luki**. This magazine's role in the affair was to question why it was inserted in the first place. No one 'caved in,' as no pressure was ever exerted, at least not by this magazine.*

This letter is in reference to the article: Three Sixty Withdraw Nazi Dedication which was in the news section of your April issue. This is the first time I had purchased your magazine and the article left me not only with a bad taste, but also very angry. It is unfortunate that bigotry exists, but for a strategy magazine to be a part of it is contemptible.

If a Soviet soldier was depicted would you have labeled it a dedication to a communist soldier? Why not refer to the Utah Beach dedication as a dedication to a Democrat soldier? German soldiers were no more all Nazis than all American soldiers were all democrats. Soldiers are men and women who defend their countries and families. Political parties and politicians are not a factor.

Being a fourteen year old veteran of the United States, and an American who is proud of his German ancestry I know that your prejudicial terminology would bring offence to any serviceman who defends his country and his home, especially German-Americans. You owe us all an apology and a retraction.

Thomas R Butsch
Master Sergeant USAFR
Trooper WSP

The German army were not defending their 'countries and families,' but fighting to establish a Nazi 'World Order.' No apology or retraction will be forthcoming.

A for Amiga

As an Amiga computer owner, I have tried all the computer magazines available for the Amiga format, but none of them match up to the quality of your magazine. Perhaps you could tell me whether Three Sixty intend to publish their **V For Victory** series of games for the Amiga. I have particularly enjoyed their **Harpoon** games and feel sure that Amiga owners would feel let down if this is not going to happen.

Matthew Sibley
Dover, UK

Atomic Games, who developed the series for Three Sixty, say it has not been decided whether to convert the series to the Amiga, but the matter is under discussion

Back to the future

Too bad Microprose's Quentin Chaney did not mention the fact that if you fly at 90+ or 270+, your F-15 will reverse direction instantaneously!. According to Microprose Tech Support, this is a bug in all their flight sims that they are unable to solve.

Keep Down the Upgrade Path coming, it's one of the most valuable columns in the mag.

A J Ceglia
Delaware Water Gap, PA 18327

Ever anxious to serve our readers, the Upgrade Path has now been extended to 2 pages

RISK factor

I would like to congratulate you on your magazine which, in my opinion, is one of the best on the market. I would now like to draw your attention to the news section in the April issue. The article headlined 'Three Sixty Withdraws Nazi Dedication' refers to Europe and especially to Germany's dedication to prevent (neo) Nazism. I know this is just a small detail, but when your writer refers to Germany being extremely sensitive to Nazi iconography, he also mentioned: 'even the boardgame **RISK** was banned until quite recently.'

While it is true that any kind of Nazi iconography is restricted (even as far as model kits), **RISK** was never a censored item in Germany. It has been freely available for at least the last 20 years without interruption. MPS did have problems publishing games like **Gunship 2000**, but these are now freely available, too.

I feel I had to point this out to you, because the article implies Germany as being a very much censored country when

Some people lock themselves up in compounds, some pay loads of money to therapists, but sensible people with problems write to:

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in truth, the media is much *less* restricted than in the US where certain words are 'bleeped out' on television.

Daniel Osers
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

Thanks for the correction. It was not our intention to imply that censorship was rampant in Germany

Ban the boot

I've been reading *Strategy Plus* since 1991. It's concept is great; focus on strategy games. I expected it would answer the question: do I buy this game or don't I buy it? Most of the reviews do not answer the critical questions, or make it difficult for readers to find the answers. Some of these questions include:

1) What are the minimum graphics requirements?
2) How long does a typical game take to play?
3) Is the game real-time?
4) Does the game have copy protection and if so, how annoying is it?

Explanation of the above questions:

1) I have an ATI Ultra Graphics Card and do not want to waste money on a sub-SVGA game
2) If a game takes 50 hours to play, it probably means that there is more substance and strategic planning. It also means that the gamer may be willing to make a serious commitment.
3) So people like real-time; I think such games belong in the video parlors with **Pac Man**.
4) Products that require the gamer to boot off a disk should be banned!

Ideally information should be put in a table, giving the reader the vital facts first. It would also be helpful to place these tables side-by-side so the reader can make comparisons. To that end, I would like to see more articles like that Steve Wartofsky's *White Death on the Russian Front* (issue 28). Also on my wish list is a review of 16-bit sound cards. Please, give me a reason to renew my subscription later in the year.

Niels Kistrup
Palinsboro, NJ 08326

The Editor needs a pay raise - that seems to me (the Editor) like an excellent reason to renew your subscription. The duty of a reviewer as I see it, is to provide enough data, coupled with a subjective opinion, for you to make an informed purchasing decision.

Fix don't fix

I read with great interest the two letters in your April issue regarding **Comanche: Maximum Overkill** and **Star Legions**, from Michael Windom and Michael Liebert respectively. I encountered precisely the same problems with these two programs. With respect to '**Comanche,**' I did what NovaLogic seems to desire, and returned the game to the store. I was disappointed at not being able to use what appears to be a breakthrough simulator.

With respect to **Star Legions**: you point out in your response to his letter that Mindcraft is sending out an upgrade to registered users which, presumably, would fix the problems he describes. It doesn't. I got the upgrade in response to a complaint to Mindcraft. The program still froze. I wrote again to Mindcraft and received a response advising me to disable my game card and VESA driver. I did: no result. The final advice from Mindcraft was to disable my sound card. Since digitized speech is so large a selling point for the game, I declined.

All this raises one last point I would like to make: I would love to see a column in your magazine devoted to precisely such glitches, bugs, freezes, and crashes. I would like to see the publisher's response to these problems. These should be monitored so that publishers don't get off the hook by issuing 'fix' disks that don't fix.

Joseph Sahyan
Farmingdale, NY 11735

We are quite willing to help in any way we can. Already our upgrade section has been expanded to two pages, while Auntie Judith is offering solid advice on hardware problems. Like yourself, readers should first try Tech Support. If they are unable to obtain satisfaction then we will publicize the problem and where possible try to find a solution. Perhaps other readers may be able to help here also.

Rex vex

I'm having a problem with **Rex Nebular** on the higher levels and with my mouse refusing to recognise certain items that need to be picked up. On level 3, the laser beam cannot be redirected a sscond time. I have spent god knows how much on phone calls and faxes to Microprose, but to no avail.

I own 14 Microprose games and I hope this is not typical of the products to come. As soon I mention **Rex Nebular** to tech support it's as though a red flag goes up. Hopefully you can shed some light on these problems.

Ron McLendon
Winston-Salem, NC27127

You do not say which mouse you are using. Microprose support Microsoft compatibles mice that have version 7 (and above) drivers. If you have older drivers then update them. To redirect the laser beam you must have the two mirrors: the compact case, and the rear view available from the gas station. This information came from MPS Tech Support.

Cross reference

In your modem games listing, what does 'cross platform compatible' mean? For example, The **Perfect General** is thus described.

Lance Gifford
Scottsdale, AZ 85250

*It means that certain games allow different systems to connect with each other. For example, **The Perfect General** allows someone with an Amiga computer to play an opponent with a PC compatible via modem.*

EA attack

I read the Dear Judith and Two's Company columns with great interest.

I have a question relating to **688 Attack Sub** published by Electronic Arts. Until recently I have always played this game against the computer. With the incorporation of a modem into my hardware setup, I was anxious to play against a 'live' opponent. After a dozen tries, a dozen failures, and numerous calls to EA, I am totally stumped. EA's response was that 'maybe your computers aren't compatible.' What kind answer is that? Both me and my opponent have IBM compatible.

Gordon Lewis
Edison, NJ 08837

A totally idiotic answer I would say. There are known problems in playing '688' by modem. The first thing you should do is check you have the latest version. This can be done by making sure that there is a file called 'modem.688' in the main directory. If this is not present then send the original disks back to EA for the upgrade which is not available separately. If you have the latest version then note that game can only be played at 1200 baud. If you have a high speed modem you must switch off error correction and flow control also.

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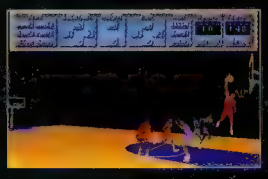

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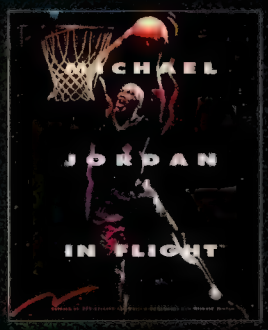

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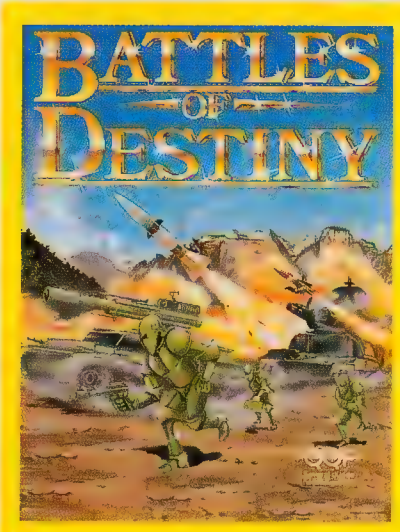

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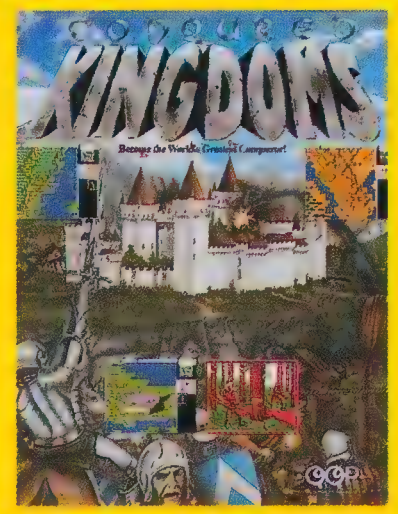

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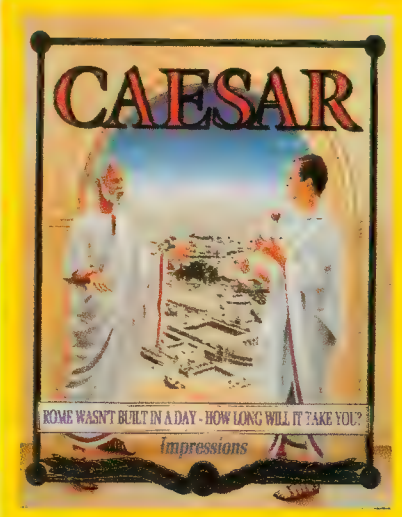

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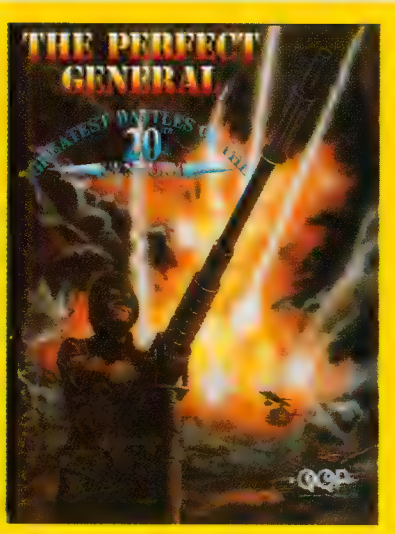

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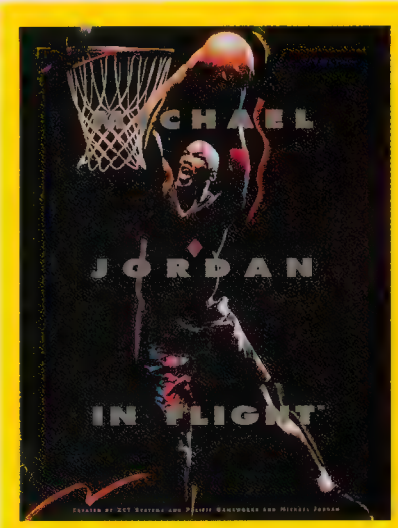

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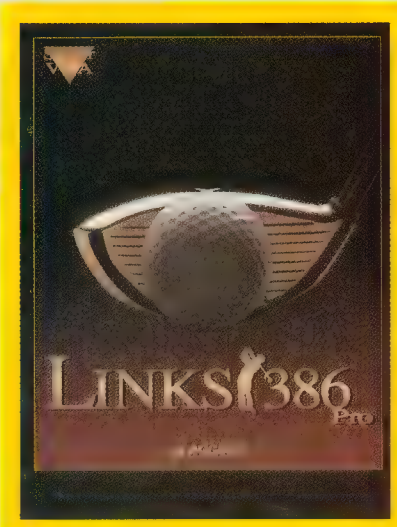

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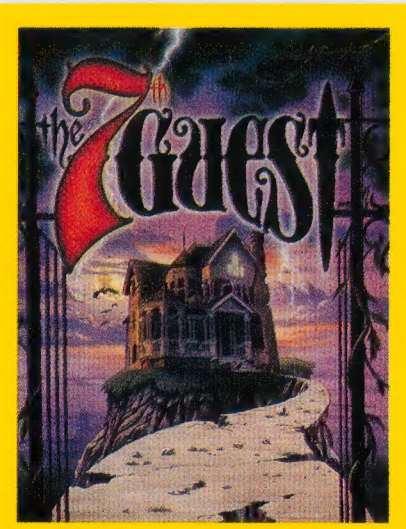

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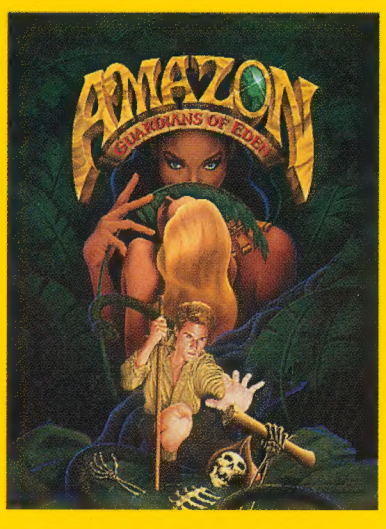

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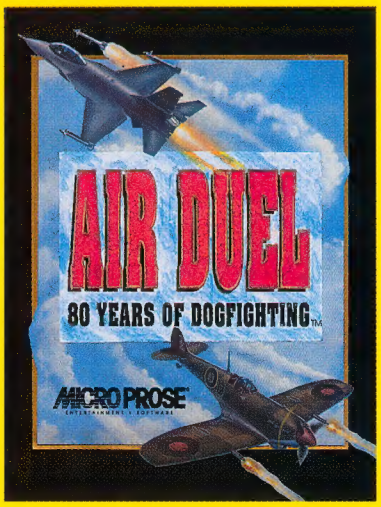

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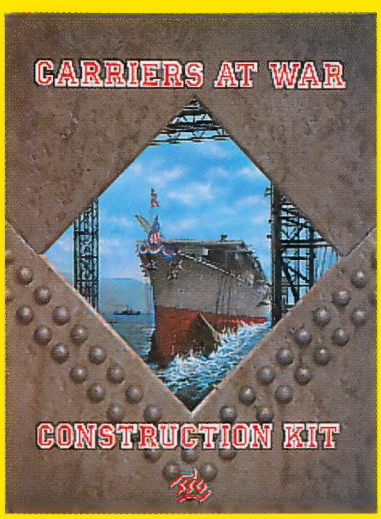

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